

# VIKTOR AND JIRKA. HAVE RUNNERS - WILL TRAVEL.

You may remember Viktor Roethlin and Jirka Arndt from the April 2002 Newsletter (Issue 13). Viktor and Jirka were invited to train at Falls Creek by Troopy and ended up staying with me at the Schuss Ski Lodge. Viktor is the Swiss Marathon Record Holder (2:10.54) and Jirka finished 8th in the Sydney Olympic 5000 metres final (even though I embarrassed myself on our first meeting when I asked Jirka if he did a bit of jogging!) Anyway, they were both fantastic guys and they did agree to be interviewed for our Newsletter as long as we were finished before a special on Queen's Freddy Mercury came on the TV.

## **N.M. Viktor and Jirka, welcome to Australia. Why have you travelled across the world to Australia?**

J.A. Well, I am still recovering from my injury - a stress fracture to the femur, so a lot of my time has been a holiday. First, we were in Perth, then we drove across Western Australia, South Australia and onto Melbourne. We have had a great time and now I am here in Falls Creek ready to resume some light training.

V.R. I am actually here for sight-seeing only as I don't like training that much. No, seriously - I have heard that there's a good running group from Geelong up here at Falls Creek so I thought I had better train with them. But the real story is that I hate the winter time in Switzerland and I wanted to spend three months training here during the Australian summer. Out here I can put in some better quality training because the weather is so much better.

## **N.M. I understand that you met Lee Troop and he told you about Falls Creek.**

V.R. Yes, I met Lee overseas at a couple of races. Then, after his great race in Rotterdam (Lee ran 2:10.04) we talked about training and he told me that he was coming up to Falls Creek after Christmas and that I should come up to train too. So here I am.

## **N.M. Viktor - you are a trained Physiotherapist and are giving Jirka a massage as we speak.**

V.R. Yes. I work at home as a Physiotherapist. It is good as a runner as I always have my own personal physiotherapist with me when I travel so I can treat myself if needed. The only part of my body that is hard for me to treat is my back. Also, I can massage my friends if they are kind to me.

## **N.M. And Jirka - you are a university student studying architecture.**

V.R. Yes. I started studying in 1995. Then in 1997 I took a break so I could prepare for the 2000 Olympic Games. I felt pretty good as a full time athlete so I am still having a break from study. I just found it very hard to be a dedicated athlete and a full-time student at the same time. I think you can run when you are young then study when you are older.

## **N.M. Both of you represented your countries at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. Jirka, you represented Germany in the 5000 metres and Viktor you ran for Switzerland in the marathon. What were your impressions of the Olympics?**

J.A. It was amazing and a great experience. It was my first Olympics and I will never forget it. However, I didn't see a lot of the Olympics outside the village as my event was one of the last on the program. I also met lots of people from other nations which was fantastic. My race result was a bit of an unexpected bonus.

## **N.M. You came 8th in the 5000 metre final. For those people who can remember the race, you were the person who pushed the pace and led the final for a fair way. What were your coach's instructions?**

J.A. I followed my coach's instructions in both the heat and the final. Both times my instructions were similar. My first goal was to make the final and to do that I had to run aggressively and fast in the first heat to make it hard for the other guys. I came 9th and was the last qualifier for the final. In the final the other guys didn't want to run so fast early on so I took up the pace. However, it was a sprint finish where I ran 2.29 for the last kilometre. Unfortunately for me, Million Wolde ran 2.27 and won the gold medal.

## **N.M. Viktor, your race was the marathon. How tough was that?**

V.R. It was very, very, very tough. I have now run six marathons and that was my hardest by a long way. It was not a problem with the hills but rather the wind in our faces in the second half was just crazy. The first half of the race was easy to run and the people on the streets were so supportive. But from Darling Harbour onwards the wind just killed us. Also, for a lot of the second half we were alone out on the highway. When I was hurting so much during the last 5 kilometres of the race my dream of finishing in the Olympic Stadium kept me going.

## **N.M. And you were disappointed with the crowd's reception when you finally ran into the stadium?**

V.R. Yes. It was a huge disappointment and the only bad thing about the whole Olympics. At the Opening Ceremony I saw the feeling and emotion given off by over 125 000 people and I thought it would be the same when the marathoners entered the stadium. Maybe the medallists got all the applause but when I arrived there was no clapping and it was deathly quiet. All the other marathoners that I talked to were

shocked by our reception. Later, when we were talking we thought maybe the stadium was full of people there only for the Closing Ceremony - maybe they were not true athletics fans and didn't understand what the marathon is all about. Perhaps they wanted us to leave the stadium as quickly as possible so the Closing Ceremony could begin.

**N.M. Your goals for the future? Firstly, Jirka - I understand that you are moving up to the marathon.**

J.A. That's right. I feel that I was a little lucky with my 8th place at the Olympics and I think that was the best I can do over 5000 metres. I trained very, very hard and I think that I will not improve too much more over the shorter distances. Also, I needed a new motivation and that was either the marathon or the 10 000 metres. Last year I prepared for the Berlin Marathon but that didn't work out because of my stress fracture. Now I hope to run either the Hamburg or Rotterdam Marathon at the end of April. However, it will all depend on how my return from injury goes. Then, if I run well, I hope to record a qualifying time for the European Championships to be held in August.

**N.M. What sort of time would you have to run to qualify for the European Championships?**

J.A. I guess, under 2.14. Because it's in Munich, our Federation will have a full starting list.

**N.M. Jirka, I understand that you played a part in Ronaldo da Costa's World Best time at the Berlin Marathon in 1998?**

J.A. Yes, I was one of the pace-makers for the first part of the race. I was asked to run World Record Pace for the first 15 kilometres. However, the lead group didn't go with us and we had to keep slowing down and wait for them. Eventually, they went through half way in 64.42. I watched the second half from the pick-up van. Da Costa ran an unbelievable 61.23 to smash the old record. He even had the energy to do cart wheels near the finish line.

**N.M. And Viktor - you're training for the London Marathon. There are some very big names racing there! Apart from yourself - who is running?**

V.R. Khalid Khannouchi, the World Record Holder is running, so is Tergat, Pinto, and then of course it will be the first serious marathon from Haile Gebrselassie.

(Ed. Gebrselassie ran a marathon at the age of 16. He ran 2 hours 42 minutes) Everybody will be watching to see how the 'great' Gebrselassie goes. It will be wonderful for me to run in the same race as him.

**N.M. What marathons have you run?**

V.R. My first marathon was in Hamburg where I ran 2:13.36. My second was in Berlin where I had to pull out with muscle problems. Then I ran Rotterdam and ran the Olympic Qualifying time (2:12.53). My fourth was the Sydney Olympics where I ran my slowest time of 2 hours 20 minutes. Last year I ran Rotterdam, the same race as Lee Troop, and ran a new P.B. of 2:12.21. Finally, I ran the Berlin Marathon in September 2001 and ran the Swiss Record of 2:10.54.

**N.M. So, except for the Olympics, each completed race has been an improvement. Is your next goal to run under 2:10?**

V.R. For me, my most important race this year is the European Championships. But of course, every marathoner would love to run under 2:10 at least once in their life and that is my dream too.

**N.M. Both of you have been to Kenya to train. How did this come about and can you relate some of your experiences there?**

J.A. One of the main reasons was that the weather was so much better in Kenya. The temperature is always over 20 degrees. Also, we went there for the high altitude. Training there is great preparation for the spring races.

**N.M. And you trained at Eldoret?**

J.A. Yes, at Eldoret where most of the good Kenyans come from. Also, Kip Keino has a farm there and we stayed with him for a couple of weeks. We were able to train with the Kenyans a few times a week.

**N.M. You only ran with the Kenyans a few times a week?**

J.A. Yes, if you train with them more than that it would kill you. There are so many of them and there is always someone ready to push the pace. Each training session could be like a world-class race if you weren't careful.

**N.M. So you did your quality training with the Kenyans and your recovery days by yourself?**

J.A. Yes, most people would not last too long if they did it any other way.

**N.M. How high is Eldoret?**

J.A. About 2100 metres. (Falls Creek is about 1600 metres)

**N.M. Did you enjoy your time in Kenya?**

J.A. I like it very much there because the Kenyans are very friendly people, it's warm and there are lots of great places to train.

**N.M. Viktor, what were your experiences in Kenya?**

V.R. For me, Kenya was great for four reasons: firstly, it was only a one day trip to get there from Europe - it was a ten hour flight to get from say, Zurich to Nairobi then a one hour flight from Nairobi to Eldoret. So it's not a big trip and there's little time difference. Secondly, there is the summer weather. Third,

there is the altitude and last, you have great people to run with. In Kenya it opens your mind to what is possible if you train hard. Also, you have to improve just to keep up.

**N.M. What were some of the Kenyan sessions you completed that were particularly hard?**

V.R. The hardest part for me was the fact that they start training in the early morning - about 5:30 am. For this session they might run for 60 minutes with a very slow beginning, then the pace increases. At the beginning of this session there might be 20 runners and at the end probably 50 runners. Then, for the second session later in the morning we might do 10 x 1 kilometres. We might do the first of these at 2.55 pace, then get faster and faster until we might run the last one in 2.48. There would be 90 seconds recovery between. And don't forget, this is all at altitude and on dirt roads. Then, there would be a third session later in the day.

**N.M. You have mentioned that the Kenyan timetable is a bit hard to understand?**

V.R. Yes. We would often have a meeting to discuss what time the next session would take place and we would have to ask if they were talking Kenyan time or European time. For example, if they said we would train at 8:00 am. that could mean anywhere from 8 o'clock up to 11 o'clock. To train with the Kenyans you need to be able to cope with unexpected changes. They always say that there is no hurry in Africa. Also, the session can change too. The problem is that they talk in their 'mother tongue' so we often weren't sure what was happening. One morning we had decided to do a session of 25 x 1 minute. Anyway, I was just about to start the first repetition when someone said, "hey, we've changed the program and now we're doing 10 x 3 minutes!" so you have to be very flexible. But for me it was good because if you can train with the Kenyans, you can train with anyone.

**N.M. You have said that you really enjoyed the Kenyan diet including food like ugali (a stiff porridge made from water and ground maize).**

J.A. Yes, their food was very nutritious. Everything they eat is very fresh and is grown in the area without chemicals. We stayed at a farm and had all the cooking done for us. Early in the day we would eat light meals like rice with other substitutes but the evening meal would be a big meal with salads and stews with meat. We only ate meat in the evening. It was like a huge celebration at every evening meal.

**N.M. Jirka, I understand that you set a record for the most chapattis eaten in one session.**

J.A. Yes, we had a special meal where they cooked chapattis, which are a flat, wheat pancake that is grilled. The chapattis are then filled with salads and vegetables and they're very tasty. Sometimes they are filled with sweets too.

**N.M. How many did you eat?**

J.A. I ate nine and I'm told that is the record.

**N.M. What did the Kenyans say?**

J.A. They were stunned!

**N.M. Well, I'm glad the Kenyans are beatable in something.**

**Viktor, you were saying that you feel so much better after eating the Kenyan food.**

V.R. Yes, even your skin feels better because for 4 - 5 weeks you are eating no junk food at all. It is one of the other great things about training in Kenya. In Switzerland we are born with chocolate and we tend to eat it every day but in Kenya we don't see chocolate so we don't eat it. I always felt very healthy after training in Kenya.

**N.M. Viktor, could you please relate your story about your first meeting with Daniel Komen.**

**(Ed. Daniel Komen still holds two of the great World Records - 3000 metres in 7:20.67 and 2 miles in 7:58.6)**

V.R. Yes, we were running along on my first day in Kenya when he came up to me and said, "I am Daniel Komen, please don't run in front of me." At that stage he was running really well and he was the "King" so he expected everyone, but especially white athletes, to show him respect. I found that very strange because the Kenyans are usually so friendly. However, there is a real hierarchy in Kenyan athletics and the top athletes can do whatever they like. The 'boss' used to be Moses Kiptanui, then it was Komen - it all depends on who is running well. Anyway, I said that I was European and I didn't understand his 'Kenyan Rules' so I would stay where I was.

**N.M. I understand that Daniel Komen loves motor cars.**

V.R. Yes, he has a very big house and many, many cars. All his relatives live with him. Many people say that all his money will run out after about five years. At the moment he lives like a king but who knows about the future?

**N.M. Both of you train very hard. What sort of theories do you have on training? You go first, Jirka.**

J.A. I have now moved up to the marathon so my training has changed. However, I believe that once you can run the full 42 kilometres you then need to be able to run at Marathon Pace so some of my long runs incorporate Marathon Pace efforts.

**N.M. Your thoughts on training, Viktor?**

J.A. I agree with what Jirka has said about doing some training at Marathon Pace. The big difference I have noticed about Australian Training and my training is that we have three to four high level weeks then

we have a couple of easier weeks to recover and become stronger. Also, at different times of the year I do three main types of sessions. I do speed work under Marathon Pace so Marathon Pace feels easier, then we do Marathon Pace training so your body is ready for marathon day. I might do anywhere from 15 minutes to one hour at Marathon Pace depending on where I am in my preparation. Then every second week I do Marathon Pace training on a running machine (treadmill). This is one of my favourite sessions because I can set the running machine for exactly the correct pace. Finally, the long runs are very important. They are usually for 2 hours and 30 minutes, sometimes with some faster 5 kilometre sections. For example, I might run 50 minutes at 4 min. / km. pace then 5 kilometres at 3.04 pace then repeat. To be a good runner you need to be smart and to have a good body that doesn't get injured. We always say in Switzerland that marathon training is very easy because all you need to do is train for years and years without getting injured!

**N.M. Perhaps that's why Steve Moneghetti and Robert De Castella were so good for so long!**

V.R. Exactly.

**N.M. Viktor, you mentioned hard weeks and easy weeks. How many kilometres would you run in each?**

V.R. A hard week is over 200 kilometres. My highest week was 240 kilometres. An easy week is 150 kilometres.

**N.M. Both of you make sure you have a nap in the afternoon. How important is this in your training week?**

J.A. It is very important for me. If I miss my nap for a week I feel very stressed and don't recover from my training sessions as well. If you are training two and sometimes three times a day like we do, it is important that you have quality rest. Unless I have at least 8 hours sleep a night and an hour nap during the day, I don't absorb my training.

V.R. Yes, I agree with Jirka.

**N.M. Both of you also include regular gym and circuit training in your week's training. What does this involve?**

V.R. At least three times a week we do gym training. I have done gym since I began running. At first I did gym without weights to learn correct technique but now I use weights. I think the benefit of gym training can be seen in the six marathons I have completed where I have not had any cramps or muscles problems. I also do 20 minute circuits involving 30 seconds of easy skipping alternating with 30 seconds of core stability / strength / flexibility work.

**N.M. Two quick questions before Freddy Mercury comes onto the TV. How do your countries assist you?**

V.R. We have a Sports Institute like the A.I.S. For me this is really good because I work there and they understand that I need three months off to travel to Australia to train. Fortunately they don't put too much pressure on me. This Sports Institute also has all the facilities and medical back-up that an athlete needs. However, because the money comes from the Federation, sometimes pressure can be put on athletes to compete in certain races.

J.A. For me the assistance is similar to Viktor. The only difference is that Germany is bigger so we have centres spread throughout the country.

**N.M. Does German athletics still have talent identification from a very young age?**

J.A. Not so much now.

**N.M. One last question for Viktor. You have talked to the Portuguese marathoners, Castro and Pinto, plus a few of the Spanish athletes. What have they told you about their marathon preparations?**

V.R. They do a lot of what I do because I have learnt from them. However, there are two main difference. Firstly, they run 280 kilometres in a hard week and 'only' 200 kilometres in an easy week. The other point is that they run perhaps 90% of their training on asphalt. They do this because they claim you need to train your muscles to run on the road so you can race the marathon on the roads. Last year I did some more training on asphalt and ran my best time.

**N.M. So it works for some people?**

V.R. Yes.

**N.M. And I reckon that lots of athletes would become injured if they tried it.**

V.R. Yes, it can be a risky way to train. I was also thinking about occasionally running 280 kilometre weeks but my coach talked me out of it. We don't have the same doctors that look after many of the Portuguese and Spanish athletes.

**N.M. Well, Viktor and Jirka - thank you very much for your time. I hope you both enjoy your time in Australia and Viktor - I hope you run really well in the London Marathon and Jirka - I hope you return to top class running very quickly.**

J.A. Thank you very much, Neil.

V.R. Thank you. We are both looking forward to visiting Geelong, maybe next year, to have a run with the Geelong Team.

**N.M. OK. Let's go and have a look at Freddy Mercury.**

**Note:** Unfortunately, Viktor Roethlin was not able to compete in the London Marathon due to a stress fracture. Jirka Arndt did run the Rotterdam Marathon but was forced to pull out at the 30 kilometre mark with stomach cramps. Jirka is due to run the Berlin Marathon on September 29.

## RUNNER PROFILE

### Jirka Arndt

**Occupation / Student** Student in Potsdam / Full Time athlete

**Age** 28      **Date of Birth** 7 / 8 / 73

**Height** 179 cm.    **Weight** 62 kg.

**Married / Single** Single

**Coach** Axel Pohlmann

#### Personal Bests

**1500m.** 3:44.7

**3000m.** 7:57.9

**5000m.** 13:21.47

**10000m.** 28:22.71

**Other** 2000 metres - 5:05.7

**Favourite Food** Fish

**Food Eaten Before a Race** Pasta / white bread

**Favourite Drink** Milk Shake (also, Rivella)

**Favourite Movie** "Gladiator"

**Favourite Book** "Die Saulen Der Erde". (only German title) by Kent Follet

**Favourite Music / Band** "Depeche Mode", "U2", "Garbage"

**Favourite TV Show** "Die Harald Schmidt Show" (a German Letterman style show)

**Favourite Night Spot** Bar / Pub

**Favourite Holiday Spot** USA

#### An August 2000 Training Week in Flagstaff, Arizona (altitude 2000 metres) with the German Team in the lead-up to the Sydney Olympics.

**Mon.** am. warm-up then 20 x 400 metres (64 secs.) with 90  
secs. (250 metres recovery)

pm. 30 mins. easy.

**Tues.** am. 60 mins. easy.

pm. 90 mins. easy.

**Wed.** am. 45 mins. easy.

40 mins. Gym

Sprints (10 x 60 metres)

pm. 40 mins. easy.

**Thur.** am. warm-up then 6 x 600 metres / 300 metres (94 secs. / 45  
secs).

200 metres easy b/w 600 / 300.

700 metre jog after 300's.

pm. 40 mins. easy

**Fri.** am. 1 hour 50 min. easy run.

pm. Rest

**Sat.** am. 60 mins. easy.

pm. 50 mins easy.

**Sun.** am. warm-up then 5 x 2000 metres (6.09) with 300 metre very slow  
jog (2:30 min.) between

pm. 35 mins. easy.

**Total - 175 km.**

**Other Training / Recovery Sessions.**

Massage twice a week. Pilates in gym. Water running once or twice a week. Cycling occasionally. Sauna, spa, Swiss Ball, Foot Gym.

**Favourite Training Session** 15 km. "Marathon Pace" run (47 minutes)

**Favourite Race** Berlin Marathon.

**Best Ever Performances** Ran 13:21.41 at Rome Golden League 5000 metres in 2000. (Ali Saidi Sief won in 12.51 but has since been banned for 2 years on a doping charge). Ran 5.05 for 2000 metres at Runaway Bay, Gold Coast during the 2000 Olympic Preparation Meet. Ran 28:22.17 for 10 km. at Mount Sac, USA.

**Favourite Place To Train** Potsdam (home)

**Toughest Ever Training Session**

4 x 2000 metres at 2000 metre altitude. Ran each first km. in 2.55 / second km. in 2.45 for a 2 km. time of 5.40. Six minute recovery between.

**Most Admired Runner / Person** Dieter Baumann (before he claimed drugs had been put in his toothpaste!)

**Advice to Other Runners** "do it with all your heart or leave it alone!" A few years ago I tried to study full-time and train for the Olympics - it was impossible to do both 100% so now I am only a full-time athlete.

**Goals for the Future** "to run a marathon in under 2 hours 10 minutes and to represent Germany in the 2004 Olympic Marathon in Athens."

**Anything else???**

I remember one very long marathon preparation training run I did with Viktor in August 2001. We were to run 40 kilometres with 15 minutes at Marathon Pace after an hour and again after 2 hrs 15 minutes. It poured with rain from the beginning and we were soaked to the bone very quickly (and so was the trainer following us on the bike!) The last Marathon Pace section became a war between us and the weather. It was so hard with water hitting us from all directions but I'll never forget the feeling of contentment when we had finished. I had never run that far before and I felt that we had conquered a session few others could have completed.

## **RUNNER PROFILE**

Following on from the interview with Jirka Arndt and Viktor Roethlin in the last newsletter ("Viktor and Jirka - Have Runners Will Travel"), I thought you may be interested to learn a little more about our little Swiss visitor.

### **Viktor Roethlin**

**Occupation** Physiotherapist

**Age** 27 **Date of Birth** 14 / 10 / 74

**Height** 172 cm. **Weight** 60 kg.

**Married / Single** Single.

**Coach** Bernard Marti

**Personal Bests**

**1500m.** 3:49.59

**3000m.** 8.00.43

**5000m.** 13:40.28

**10000m.** 28:22.53

**Half Marathon** 62.47

**Marathon** 2 :10.54

**Other** Around my house - 15.6 seconds.

**Favourite Food** Italian Food

**Food Eaten Before a Race** Pasta

**Favourite Drink** Rivella (a special Swiss drink based on milk)

**Favourite Movie** "Any movie with Julia Roberts"

**Favourite Book** "The Alchemist" by Paulo Coelho .

**Favourite Music / Band** "Queen"

**Favourite TV Show** "I don't have time for much television"

**Favourite Night Spot** The Havana Bar in Pfisteren  
**Favourite Holiday Spot** Norway / Scandinavia

**A Hard Training Week of 220 / 230 kilometres.**

<b>Mon.</b>	am.	40 mins. easy run.	
	am.	75 mins. easy run. Finish with 4 x 100 metres strides, then stretching.	
	pm.	30 mins. cycling / 20 mins. Stability & Rope	Skipping / 45
	mins. gym.		
<b>Tues.</b>	am.	60 mins. steady run. Finish with 4 x 100 metres strides, then stretching.	
	pm.	15 mins. warm-up / 20 - 30 mins. co-ordination drills. / 45 mins. steady run.	
<b>Wed.</b>	am.	100 mins. easy run. Finish with 4 x 100 metres strides, then stretching.	
	pm.	50 mins. easy run. 20 mins. Stability & Rope Skipping.	
<b>Thur.</b>	am.	60 mins. easy run. Finish with 4 x 100 metres strides, then stretching.	
	pm.	20 mins. warm-up. 10 x 200 metres (30 secs.) 20 mins. cool-down then stretching.	
<b>Fri.</b>	am.	40 mins. easy run.	
	am.	20 mins. warm-up 12 x 1 km. (2.50 - 2.55 km. pace) 20 mins. cool-down, then stretching.	
	pm.	30 mins. cycling / 20 mins. Stability &	Rope Skipping / 45 mins.
	gym.		
<b>Sat.</b>	am.	20 mins. warm-up 50 mins. @ 3.05 km. pace. 20 mins cool-down then stretching.	
	pm.	45 mins. easy run. "Foot Gym" then stretching.	
<b>Sun.</b>	am.	Long run made up of: 60 mins. @ 4 min. / km. pace 15 mins. @ 3.05 min. / km. pace 60 mins. @ 4 min. / km. pace 15 mins. @ 3.05 min. / km. pace 10 mins. @ 5 min. / km. pace then stretching.	
	pm.	40 mins. deep water running.	

**Note:** When two runs are scheduled for the morning, the first run is at 6:00 am. and the second at about 10:00 am.

**Other Training / Recovery Sessions.**

Regular Massage. Ice- Baths (1 minute in water / 1 minute out) Sauna (10 mins. sauna / cold shower times 3). cycling on exercise bike. Deep-Water Running. Gym. Foot Gym. Skipping. Stretching. Stability Exercises.

**Favourite Training Session** Marathon Pace Training.

**Favourite Race** 10 km. road-race in Lucern.

**Best Ever Performances** Running 2:10.54 in the 2001 Berlin Marathon - 8th place (Swiss Record)

**Favourite Place To Train** St. Moritz

**Toughest Ever Training Session**

Last summer in St. Moritz I ran a Marathon Pace session of 19.4 kilometres in 60 minutes at 1800 metres altitude.

**Most Admired Runner / Person** Lee Troop!

**Advice to Other Runners** "Go Hard or Go Home!"

**Goals For The Future**

1. To run well at the the 2002 European Championships Marathon. (Viktor came 19th.)
2. To run under 2.10 for the Marathon.
3. To compete at the Athens Olympics in 2004.