

Sports Illustrated FOR WOMEN

Tara Lipinski
Has the Skating
World Spinning



Spring Training!

5 AWESOME WORKOUTS

from **Anna Kournikova**
and Other Top Athletes
PLUS: Great New Gear
for the Season

Music to Get You PUMPED

FAST, HEALTHY FOOD

QUIZ: ARE YOU A GOOD SPORT?



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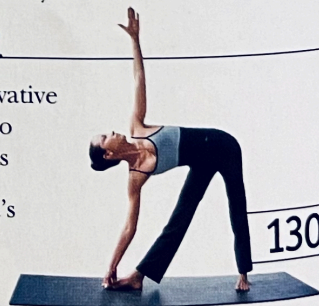
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HIGH SCHOOL + COLLEGE

Making Strides

A budding race walker has plans to put her sport on the map

BY LAURA KARMATZ

WHENEVER Robyn Stevens walks by, heads turn—and not because she's a 5' 2", cute California girl. Some laugh at her exaggerated hips, swinging like a pendulum on steroids. Others smile at her arms, pumping at 55 mph. But before gawking onlookers can mutter the words *race walking*, Stevens, 16, has blown past them.

Not exactly baseball, race walking ranks slightly below darts on the American sports popularity scale. However, its lack of publicity belies the effort and coordination the sport takes. "The first time I tried it, I felt really, really dumb—like a duck waddling," says Stevens, whose win at the 1999 Junior Pan Am Games was the first U.S. race walking gold medal in the competition.

Her early success makes her the perfect poster child for her sport, if such a thing could exist. "My



WALK THIS WAY
"My dream," says Stevens, "is to be the Prefontaine of race walking."

What music psyches you up?

AMANDA SCHAEFFER

Harper College, Palatine, Ill.

Wrestling and

boxing | *I'm Just a Girl* by No Doubt | **The girl-power thing really makes me feel like women can do anything.**



JANICE DANIELIAN

Richard Montgomery High School, Rockville, Md.

Taekwondo | *Baby Got Back* by Sir Mix-A-Lot

Not only does it relax me, it also gets me mentally ready to kick some butt!



MICHELE DREISTADT

Bloomsburg (Pa.) University

Softball | *Dragula* by Rob Zombie

The moment I hear the beat, I get excited about stepping onto the field. I feel as if the world is mine to control.

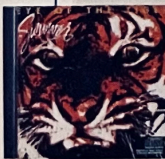


LINDSEY KAYLE

Liberty-Benton High, Findlay, Ohio

Cross-country | *Eye of the Tiger* by Survivor

When 34 teenage girls are belting it out, you just have to feel motivated to run!



6 What's your favorite refueling food?

Let us know at www.siforwomen.com or write to SPORTS ILLUSTRATED FOR WOMEN, 135 W. 50th St., New York, NY 10020-1393

dream is to be the Fontaine of race walking," she says, referring to the 1970s runner who brought fans flocking to distance events. Even though she's probably not bound for a Wheaties box anytime soon ("Most people don't even know it's an Olympic sport," she admits), Stevens has serious marketing potential: "She's this cute kid. Almost every competition she's been in, she's won," says Claudia Wilde, her coach at the Westwind Flyers Track Club, "and when she walks, you see the sport's flow and grace."

Even though Stevens, a junior at Vacaville (Calif.) High, can heel-toe through a mile in 7:26—faster than most of us can run one—it will probably be her other track event that initially gen-

erates interest in her story. Because race walking isn't a sanctioned high school sport in California, Stevens is a middle distance runner for Vacaville High and placed fifth in the 1,600 meters at the 1999 state championships. "The two sports feed off one another," says Wilde, "People notice her running, then are curious about her race walking."

A veritable Tasmanian devil as a toddler, Stevens started running at age eight with her father, Robert. In seventh grade, after whizzing by most of the boys in gym class, she tried out for track. At a meet soon after, Wilde noticed her as the boys chased her around the track. Thinking the lead wouldn't last and stunned when it did, Wilde immediately asked

Stevens to join her club. "I was so impressed," Wilde remembers. "She didn't run. She floated."

The transition from running to race walking, a discipline Wilde has all of her athletes try, came easily to Stevens. The first time out of the gate at a national competition, the 1997 Junior Olympics, she finished second. Her hips have been swinging ever since.

With her hopes pinned on the 2004 Olympics, Stevens is scouting out Division I college coaches who will let her race-walk on the side. "The sport takes a lot of patience and determination, but once you learn how, it's beautiful," she says, already sounding like a spokesperson. "Good race walkers in a row look like an ocean wave crashing." ♦

On the Flip Side

It's one thing to love your sport, but Liz Iacuzzi, club soccer player and freshman at Miami University (Ohio), is literally head over heels for *fútbol*: She inbounds the ball with a front flip. After getting a running start, the former gymnast uses momentum generated from a front handspring (on top of the ball) to propel the ball into play with extra speed and force.

"The first time I tried it, the ball went straight up in the air and I landed on my butt," admits Iacuzzi, who executed her first field flip in seventh grade. But within a few weeks she could complete the move; she was using it regularly by her freshman year at Evanston (Ill.) Township High. "By my junior year," the midfielder says, "I knew where to place the ball. I could get it to a teammate so she could head it into the goal."

Iacuzzi's flip surprised opponents throughout the season ("They didn't know what defense to use," she says), but a non-flip-related strained ligament benched her at the 1999 club nationals, where Miami, a two-time winner, was eliminated early. Meanwhile, Evanston will soon boast another flipper: Iacuzzi's sister, Franny, the leading scorer on her eighth-grade team, is perfecting the move for the class of 2004. —JESSICA ULLIAN

