

"LEARN FROM OTHER RUNNERS"

NAME: ANTONIO VILLANUEVA

HOME: Xalapa, Mexico

AGE: 48

OCCUPATION: Physical education teacher and taxicab-fleet owner

ACHIEVEMENT: At the Games, Villanueva won the 5000 in 14:44.18 despite rain, wind and cold and clocked a world record 30:02.56 in the 10,000-meter race. Later, in the 3000-meter steeplechase, Villanueva was bumped and fell in the first water jump, injuring tendons in one leg. Forced to land flat-footed and lose 10 yards in each of the remaining water jumps, he still finished a respectable fourth in that event.

CAREER: Villanueva began running in the army at age 19 after a drill instructor sought to punish him by making him run around the track. Unable to compete in the 1968 Olympics in Mexico because of an injury, he broke his country's national record in the 3000-meter steeplechase two years later, eventually improving his best time to 8:36.

Early in 1972, he beat 1964 Olympic steeplechase gold medalist Gaston Roelants in a 5000-meter race in Czechoslovakia, but shinsplints slowed him during that year's Olympics, and he failed to advance from his trial heat. After retiring several years later, Villanueva stopped competing until his 40th birthday in 1980. In 1982 at the Nike/OTC Marathon in Eugene, Oregon, Villanueva, age 42, ran 2:13:41, still the third-fastest time by a master.

TRAINING: Villanueva believes that training on hard surfaces when younger led to his injuries. "When I got off the roads and started training on dirt trails, I got many fewer injuries," he says. His favorite course is a 5-mile loop on soft surfaces near his home. He runs each morning at 7:30 with a group from his club, including his son Hector. He adds a second workout later in the day.

Age, says Villanueva, has given him a greater depth and maturity to understand and learn from the training of other runners. "I've learned from many runners, but I don't train exactly like any of them."

Villanueva employs an interesting speed regimen that he calls *trabajo de corazón*, literally "heart work." Designed to improve aerobic capacity, his training begins with short sprints of 200 meters and, over a period of months, stretches to longer 1000- to 1600-meter intervals.

Now 48, Villanueva still looks for ways to improve. "I don't think my best years are behind me," he says. Among his goals: 14:05 for 5000 meters and 29:00 for 10,000.



Antonio Villanueva

ADVICE: "Just be consistent and stay healthy." Villanueva laughs when he offers this advice, adding: "I'm the one always getting injured because I train too hard."

"FOCUS ON AN EVENT"

NAME: JACQUELINE HANSEN

HOME: Topanga, California

AGE: 39

OCCUPATION: Athletics consultant

ACHIEVEMENT: Though "old" for her 35-39 age-group, Hansen won both the 1,500 and 5000 meters at the World Veterans Games. Her times were 4:42.21 and 17:43.10, the latter in atrocious weather. Hansen, however, didn't concern herself with times, saying; "I just went for the wins. Both were tactical races, and I felt I ran two of the smartest races in my life." Hansen was returning to competition following a long injury-related layoff and felt she peaked exactly at the right time.

CAREER: Hansen began running in 1966, at Granada Hills High School, before graduating to intercollegiate competition at San Fernando Valley State (now Cal State Northridge). She qualified for the 1972 Olympic Trials at 1500 meters, but didn't go, thinking she wasn't fast enough to make the team. "I now regret not participating," says Hansen.

In 1972, she ran her first marathon



Jacqueline Hansen

in Culver City, California, winning in 3:15. The following year, she won the Boston Marathon in 3:06:26 and also captured the collegiate mile championship. Two world records followed: 2:43:54 at Culver City in 1974 and 2:38:19 at Eugene in 1975, the first ever sub-2:40 by a woman. She married masters runner Tom Sturak and gave birth to a son, Michael, in 1980. Pregnancy plus a series of injuries caused Hansen to put her running career on hold until this year.

TRAINING: To rehabilitate, Hansen conditioned herself slowly, combining weight lifting and water-running (she teaches aqua-aerobics) with easy distance running. "Next year, I intend to train the same way, even though I'm not coming off an injury," she says. "The water made me supple and weights made me strong."

Hansen feels that following a structured program leading toward specific goals will help her prevent a recurrence of past injuries. She plans no marathons until she turns 40 in November. "Trying to be a road runner year-round got me into trouble," says Hansen. "I was more successful when I had a track season, a cross-country season and still had a rest season between." She loves to run on the trails in the hills near her home in Topanga, using these workouts for her distance base.

Later she sticks to flat running on grass or a dirt track.

ADVICE: "Figure out your best event and focus on it. That plus being consistent in training are the two keys to success."

"RUN WITHIN YOURSELF"

NAME: IRENE OBERA

HOME: Fremont, California

AGE: 54

OCCUPATION: High school principal

ACHIEVEMENT: Obera dominated the sprints at the Games, winning the 100-, 200- and 400-meters, a repeat of her triple victory in Rome two years before. In Melbourne, she also ran on the winning 4 x 400-meter relay team and the second-place 4 x 100 team.

CAREER: A versatile athlete, Obera competed in basketball, field hockey and softball at Chico State University in California. The year after graduating, 1957, Obera watched a track meet and said, "I could do that." Someone overheard and handed her an entry blank for a meet several months later. Challenged, Obera entered and won the 100 meters. During a decade of competition, she made it to the finals at the U.S. Olympic Trials in 1960 and 1968, then retired from running—she thought.

In 1974 a debilitating disease struck

Irene Obera

