

VALE ROGER QUÉMENER: 1941 - 2021

Last week, with the passing of **Roger Quemener**, we lost one of the legends of European walking. 80 year old Quemener (17th June 1941 – 18th July 2021) represented France internationally as a racewalker on a number of occasions, but rose to fame as an ultradistance walker, setting a new world record for the 100,000m track walk and winning the Paris-Colmar classic a record seven times.



A life between two cities, a biography of Roger Quemener, by Jean Pierre Grange

Born in Brittany, Quemener joined the Parisian police in 1963 and later became a member of the AS Police Paris sporting association. He started racewalking late, at 25 years of age, but progressed rapidly, obtaining four selections in French 50km teams between 1970 and 1973.

| | | | | | |
|------|------------|----------------------------------|------------------|---------|--|
| 1970 | June 27 | SUI-FRA-FRA 50km, Schweig (SUI) | 11 th | 5:10:28 | |
| | Aug 15-16 | Lugano Trophy 50km, Odense (DEN) | 9 th | 4:52:55 | |
| 1971 | June 19-20 | SUI-FRA-FRA 50km, Vittel (FRA) | 7 th | 4:39:18 | |
| 1973 | Sep 8-9 | Lugano Final 50km, Boras (SWE) | 11 th | 4:37:10 | |

He went on to achieve a 50km lifetime best of 4:22:45 in 1976 at St Laurent du Pont, at 35 years of age. This was a competitive time for that era, especially given his age at that time.

Undaunted by even longer distances, he also contested the annual French 100km racewalk championships from 1969 to 1981, winning in 1971, 1972 and 1975, taking second place in 1980 and 1981 and taking third place in 1976 and 1977. His 3 wins were as follows

| | | | | | |
|------|--------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|----------|-------------|
| 1971 | Sep 5 | French 100km, Flers (FRA) | 1 st | 10:12:16 | |
| 1972 | Sep 10 | French 100km, Saint-Berthevin (FRA) | 1 st | 9:45:03 | French Best |
| 1975 | Sep 14 | French 100km, Still (FRA) | 1 st | 9:42:03 | French Best |

He set French 100km Bests in both 1972 (9:45:03) and 1975 (9:42:03) but perhaps the greatest walk of his career was in 1976, when he set a World Best for the 100,000m Track Walk in Saint Maur de Fossés with a spectacular time of 9:23:58.

| | | | | | |
|------|--------|---------------------------------|-----------------|---------|------------|
| 1976 | Mar 28 | 100,000m, Saint Maur des Fossés | 1 st | 9:23:58 | World Best |
|------|--------|---------------------------------|-----------------|---------|------------|

To give some idea of his ongoing excellence, consider the stats for his best 26 100km walks, in chronological order. The occasional 100km time under 10 hours is outstanding, but he did it on 8 occasions.

| Date | Age | Trk/Rd | Place | Time | |
|------------|-----|--------|--------------|----------|--|
| 05/09/1971 | 30 | R | Flers | 10:12:16 | |
| 17/09/1972 | 31 | R | St Berthevin | 9:45:03 | |
| 16/03/1975 | 33 | T | St Denis | 9:41:23 | |

| | | | | |
|------------|----|---|--------------------------|----------|
| 28/03/1976 | 34 | T | St Maur des Fossés | 9:23:56 |
| 14/09/1975 | 34 | R | Still | 9:42:03 |
| 26/09/1976 | 35 | R | Salies de Bearn | 10:13:22 |
| 02/10/1977 | 36 | R | Château-Thierry | 9:41:52 |
| 01/10/1978 | 37 | R | Mehun-sur-Yevre | 9:54:20 |
| 22/05/1980 | 38 | R | Sur Strasbourg-Paris | 11:01 |
| 05/10/1980 | 39 | R | Ile d'Oléron | 9:41:09 |
| 05/09/1981 | 40 | R | Vallorbe | 10:49 |
| 18/10/1981 | 40 | R | Bar le Duc | 9:49:59 |
| 16/03/1985 | 43 | R | Lagny-sur-Marne | 10:34 |
| 27/04/1985 | 43 | R | Bar le Duc | 10:56:51 |
| 15/09/1984 | 43 | R | Roubaix | 10:53 |
| 05/04/1986 | 44 | R | Torcy | 10:40:24 |
| 19/04/1986 | 44 | R | Château-Thierry | 10:47:39 |
| 15/03/1987 | 45 | R | Lagny-sur-Marne | 10:39:11 |
| 28/03/1987 | 45 | R | Château-Thierry | 11:04:41 |
| 09/05/1987 | 45 | R | Cergy-St Christophe-Osny | 10:30:27 |
| 19/03/1988 | 46 | R | Torcy | 11:07 |
| 09/04/1988 | 46 | R | Salies de Bearn | 10:14:24 |
| 23/04/1988 | 46 | R | Bar le Duc | 10:24 |
| 01/04/1989 | 47 | R | Château-Thierry | 10:38 |
| 22/04/1989 | 47 | R | Bar le duc | 10:22:15 |

He also completed a significant number of 200km races, all in impressive times.



March 1976: Quemener leads Roger Hennebois on his way to a 100,000m world best time of 9:23:58

But Quemener had his sights set on even greater challenges, and what challenge was greater than the annual Paris-Strasbourg Classic, held in June each year and contested over a distance in excess of 500km. Over an 18 year period, from 1972 to 1989, he contested this race on 13 occasions, winning a record 7 times (1979, 1983, 1985-89). The great Gilbert Roger had held the record at 6 wins (1949, 1953-54, 1956-58) so Quemener went one better. In a unique move, he used to stop to have a shave before his arrival in Colmar, making sure he was clean-shaven as he crossed the finish line in his usual first place. In 6 of his 13 appearances, he finished the course with an average speed greater than 8km/hr, a truly astonishing statistic. Imagine walking for nearly 3 days at that average speed!

| | | | | | |
|------|--------------------|--------|-----------------|-------|--------------------|
| 1972 | Strasbourg – Paris | 513 km | 5 th | 75:08 | 6.763 km/hr |
| 1973 | Strasbourg – Paris | 493 km | 2 nd | 65:50 | 7.488 km/hr |
| 1974 | Strasbourg – Paris | 523 km | DNF | 214km | |
| 1975 | Strasbourg – Paris | 507 km | DNF | 126km | |
| 1979 | Strasbourg – Paris | 510 km | 1 st | 64:24 | 7.919 km/hr |
| 1980 | Strasbourg – Paris | 506 km | 2 nd | 60:42 | 8.336 km/hr |
| 1982 | Paris-Colmar | 508 km | DNF | 148km | |
| 1983 | Paris-Colmar | 518 km | 1 st | 64:21 | 8.068 km/hr |
| 1985 | Paris-Colmar | 518 km | 1 st | 64:57 | 7.975 km/hr |

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|------|--------------|--------|-----------------|-------|--------------------|
| 1986 | Paris-Colmar | 517 km | 1 st | 62:27 | 8.278 km/hr |
| 1987 | Paris-Colmar | 518 km | 1 st | 64:59 | 8.050 km/hr |
| 1988 | Paris-Colmar | 533 km | 1 st | 66:17 | 8.050 km/hr |
| 1989 | Paris-Colmar | 524 km | 1 st | 64:35 | 8.113 km/hr |



Roger Quemener leads the 1979 Starbourg to Paris Classic

He then joined the organising team of this legendary event, eventually becoming the deputy director.



Both legends – Roger Quemener interviews Jean Dahm at the start of the 2014 Paris-Colmar

Emmanuel Tardi has forwarded me a list of some of the highlights from the long and illustrious racing career of Roger Quemener.

| | | | | | |
|------|--------------|--|------------------|----------|-------------|
| 1970 | June 27 | SUI-FRA-FRA 50km, Schweig (SUI) | 11 th | 5:10:28 | |
| | Aug 15-16 | Lugano Trophy 50km, Odense (DEN) | 9 th | 4:52:55 | |
| 1971 | June 19-20 | SUI-FRA-FRA 50km, Vittel (FRA) | 7 th | 4:39:18 | |
| | Sep 5 | French 100km, Flers (FRA) | 1 st | 10:12:16 | |
| 1972 | Apr 30-1 May | 200km du Conflans-Saint-Honorine (FRA) | 1 st | 22:25 | |
| | Sep 10 | French 100km, Saint-Berthevin (FRA) | 1 st | 9:45:03 | French Best |
| 1973 | Apr 7-8 | Tour du Var (220km) | 1 st | 25:28 | |
| | Apr 28-29 | 200km du Conflans-Saint-Honorine | 1 st | 22:06 | |
| | Sep 8-9 | Lugano Final 50km, Boras (SWE) | 11 th | 4:37:10 | |

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|------|-----------------------------------|---|--|-------------|
| 1974 | Mar 30 -31 May 1-12 | 200km du Beaujolai Torcy 200km | 1 st 23:27 1 st 22:21 | |
| 1975 | Apr 26-27 May 17-18 Sep 14 | Tour du Var 177km 200km de Meru French 100km, Still (FRA) | 1 st 17:50 1 st 22:22 1 st 9:42:03 | French Best |
| 1976 | Mar 28 Apr 24 -25 May 9-10 | Critérium National du 100,000m, Saint Maur des Fossés Tour du Var 148km Torcy 200km | 1 st 9:23:58 1 st 13:57 1 st 22:22 | World Best |
| 1977 | May 14-15 | 200km du Bar Le Duc | 1 st 22:10 | |
| 1979 | Mar 31-Apr 1 Apr 21-22 June | 200km du Narbonne 200km du Château-Thierry Strasbourg-Paris: 510km | 1 st 24 Hours 1 st 21:37 1 st 64:12 | |
| 1980 | Apr 19-20 | 200km du Château-Thierry | 1 st 21:29 | |
| 1981 | Mar 14-15 Sep5-6: | 200km du Lagny-sur-Marne 200km du Vallorbe: | 1 st 22:26 1 st 22:23 | |
| 1982 | Mar 13-14 | Torcy 200km | 1 st 22:11 | |
| 1983 | Apr 23-24 June | 200km du Nantes Paris-Colmar: 518km | 1 st 22:45 1 st 64:12 | |
| 1985 | June | Paris-Colmar: 518km | 1 st 64:57 | |
| 1986 | June | Paris-Colmar: 517km | 1 st 62:27 | |
| 1987 | June | Paris-Colmar: 518km | 1 st 64:59 | |
| 1988 | April 9-10 June | 200km du Salies de Béarn Paris-Colmar: 519km | 1 st 21:40 1 st 66:17 | |
| 1989 | June | Paris-Colmar: 524km | 1 st 64:35 | |

In finishing, two photos of Roger, remembering him as a walker (1975) and as an administrator (2014).



After the Paris-Colmar classic had to be cancelled in 2020, the event makes its return at the end of August, with a start in the Aisne (Château Thierry) and a finish in Kaysersberg-Vignoble. The 2021 edition will surely pay tribute to Roger Quemener.

Tim Erickson
Saturday 24th July 2021