

HISTORY OF MEASURING AND CERTIFICATION IN CANADA

Written in 1984 by Norm Patenaude and Gabriel Duguay

It all started with the 1972 Olympic Marathon Trials held in Montreal, where the course had been measured once with the instrument that was considered the best at the time: the surveyor's wheel. It was a surprise when no Canadians were able to qualify for the 1972 Olympics and the analysis of the kilometre time splits revealed the course to be too long by a kilometre. Norman Patenaude and Ron Wallingford had placed 4th and 11th respectively in these trials. During that year, Norman, the unofficial National Marathon Statistician, had been trying to compile an up-to-date official all-time marathon ranking list, but it soon became apparent that the statistical time results had no value without a list of accurately measured courses. Norman then organized the initial Canadian Course Measurement Program based mostly on international correspondence with Ted Corbitt (U.S.A.) and a little with John Jewell (Great Britain). With the help of Ron Wallingford, then Canadian Track and Field Association (C.T.F.A.) Technical Co-ordinator, Norman proposed a road course measurement policy to C.T.F.A. in 1972. In 1974, C.T.F.A. finally accepted in their rules that all marathons, national championships and international road and walking events be certified prior to competition.

Bob Lazenby measured the first Canadian certified course, which was the 1974 National Marathon Championships held in Kitchener, Ontario. Bob later joined efforts with Norman to form the first measurement sub-committee. At the 1975 Boston Marathon, on Norman's initiative, a group of people including Ted Corbitt and Gabriel Duguay met to form the first Canadian Road Runners Club and discuss road course measuring. Gabriel Duguay, a runner himself, was dissatisfied with the non-existent road measuring standards in Quebec in 1974, and had been encouraged by Michel Rose to establish national and international contacts to develop a program for the Quebec Road Runners Association.

In early 1976, Bob Lazenby suggested the evaluation of measuring reports, which had been done by Ted Corbitt up to now, be handled in Canada only. That summer, Norman and Ron Wallingford took care of the measurement of the Olympic Games Marathon, using the calibrated bicycle method. At the 1979 Commonwealth Games Trials, the first Canadian course measuring meeting was held at which Gabriel was nominated to replace retiring Bob Lazenby. In 1979, Gabriel translated all of Ted Corbitt's measuring documents (with Ted's authorization), and mailed them to the 77 Quebec road race directors, in 1980. In that year Norman started to attend the Run Canada meetings to update the measuring rules and have a section on course measurement included in the Run Canada Policy Handbook. Since then, Gabriel has given four provincial measuring clinics to form 30 measurers and three course certifiers in Quebec. He has also measured 125 courses, two of which were international level events certified by Ted Corbitt.

In January of 1984, Norman and Gabriel got together with C.T.F.A.'s Technical Director, Tom MacWilliam to propose a plan for the development of qualified measurers and certifiers in Canada. The purpose of the plan was to standardize the work done by all the existing measurers and certifiers, improve the measuring and reporting of important road race measurements, increase the number of people on the road course measurement and certification sub-committee, bring the Canadian Road Course Measurement Program level to an acceptable international level and encourage more people to measure and certify road race courses. Through Fitness and Amateur Sports funding, apart from the goodwill of the measurers and certifiers, a first practical national measuring and certification clinic will be held in Ottawa July 21-22. Each province has delegated a representative to form the basis of their measuring and certification program. Sharon Clayton,

C.T.F.A.'s Special Projects Manager coordinated the efforts of all interested parties to make the clinic happen.

The 1984 course measurement seminar was well attended and most areas of the country were represented. Much good will and hard work continued over the next few years, despite funding cutbacks. Measurement documents and manuals were written (we have been using them until recently), and in some places (Ontario) a good system of measurement and certification was established. Granted, things moved slowly and finally lost momentum somewhere along the line, but that was probably a result of inadequate funding and in dealing with other important issues. This was also given low priority at the CTFA and, with no one actually in charge of the issue, it was shuffled from desk to desk at times.

Many of those involved during that period of time are still around and the system survived, not in spite of them, but because of them. Things did not move quickly or with a purpose at times, but they did move.

Roger Burrows, in particular, was interested in measurement and certification and was in the Canadian Track and Field Offices for most of the period that followed. He kept the flame alive by conducting measurement seminars, checking documentation and measuring courses. Other experienced measurers in different cities across the country worked in isolation, measuring courses and taking on protégés.

1999 proved to be the beginning of a new chapter in Canadian course measurement and certification. Two pivotal events allowed an evolution in the process: Pete Riegel's measurement seminar in Vancouver, and the Pan Am Games in Winnipeg. These allowed measurers from different parts of the country to meet and discuss how things could be improved. Bernie Conway, Canada's only IAAF/AIMS Grade 'A' measurer at the time, was given Athletics Canada's blessing and full support in becoming the country's chief measurer and certifier. The new system is now funded solely through certification fees and independent of its governing body's funding priorities.

While the process may have lost its way for a period, it was not dormant for 15 years. Thanks to a few dedicated individuals in isolated pockets around the country, the dream of those that came before, a national measurement and certification system, is still alive.

John Craig and Laurent Lacroix