

IVO MAJETIC – C71: 21:30:55

48 year old USA based Ivo Majetic became Australian Centurion Number 71 with his time of 21:30:55 in the 2017 Australian Centurions 24 Hour qualifying walk at Coburg. In keeping with our standard plan of including a profile of each new centurion on our website, here is the good oil on Ivo.

Ivo was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 21st June 1968.

He started racewalking in 1981, progressing from the short track based 3000m to the longer road based 20km and 50km races as he matured as a walker.

Ivo quickly realised that he was better suited to the longer distances. He tried his first 100km race in 1990 on the track in Prague and surprised himself and others with a Czech track record of **9:59:32**. He suffered a mid race crisis which threatened to end his walk early and “I only realised I would finish the race when I was 300 metres from the end”.

From then on, he challenged himself with further ultradistance walks, while continuing to racewalk over the shorter distances. He eventually ended his racewalking career with PBs of **1:36:09** (20km) and **4:34:11** (50km), both set in the early nineties.

With the bloodless Velvet Revolution of 1989 that led to the end of the rule of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the formation of a democratic government, Ivo’s world was rapidly changing and he could travel freely within Europe.

One ultradistance walking race in particular stands out at this time, namely a 24 Hour walk in Vallorbe, Switzerland, in September 1991. On that occasion, he covered 200km in **21:25:14** for another still standing Czech record, an amazing 9.3km/hour pace. His 100 mile split was calculated at **17:00:00**! 26 years later, this performance still stands as the 18th best ever 200km in the world.

Apart from his 100km track PB of 9:59:32 (Prague, Oct 1990), he had a road PB of around 9:52, set in the classic Lugano 100km race in Italy.

In 1992-1993, he was studying in Italy as he prepared for the 1993 Paris-Colmar classic. It was by far the longest event he had entered (518km) and he finished 10th, one of 28 starters and one of only 13 walkers to complete the course. His time of 71 hours and 55 minutes meant he walked the 518km at an average speed of 7.203km/hr.



1996 Paris-Colmar: Ivo with Czech ultrawalker Jaroslav Pruckner

It would be the first of 4 Paris-Colmar races in which he competed. He finished all 4, with two third places and two tenth places. The list reads as follows

1993	10 th	MAJETIC, IVO	AC-PRAGUE-1890	TCH	518 km	71H 55m	7.203 km/hr
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1996	3 rd	MAJETIC, IVO	AC-PRAGUE-1890	CZE	520 km	64H 23m	8.077 km/hr
1997	3 rd	MAJETIC, IVO	AC-PRAGUE-1890	CZE	534 km	66H 44m	8.002 km/hr
1999	10 th	MAJETIC, IVO	AC-PRAGUE.1890	CZE	521 km	72H 03m	7.231 km/hr

After his June 1993 Paris-Colmar walk, he moved to Houston, Texas, and spend the remainder of 1993, 1994 and 1995 living there and working. During this time, he heard about the American Centurion walk that was scheduled for September 1993 on a high school track in Xenia, Ohio. He had not trained for 3 months but decided to compete anyway. The outcome – an overall win, USA Centurion badge 48 and a 100 mile time of **18.26.24**.

In November 1995, he moved back to Prague and decided to target the 1996 Paris-Colmar. The only issue was that a starting spot required a qualifying performance. He fronted in the Bazancourt 24 Hour in spring 1996 but could only manage **188km** – not good enough to qualify (limit 195km).

Luck was on his side when he was granted a wildcard entry. He did not disappoint, walking superbly to a third place finish, his time of 64 hours and 23 mins for the 520km course working out at an average speed of 8.077km/hr. The only walkers who finished ahead of him were two of the legends of the sport, ten-times winner Grzegorz Adam Urbanowski of Poland (60h 29m) and five-times winner Zbigniew Klapa of Poland (61h 20m).

Further Paris-Colmar finishes in 1997 (3rd, 66h 44m, 534km) and 1999 (10th, 72h 03m, 51km) cemented his place as one of the best ultradistance walkers in the world.

In the 1990s, he finished many 200km races, three of them under 22 hours and countless under 24 hours. With his final Paris-Colmar completed in 1999, he retired from the sport. In March 2001, he moved to USA to live permanently.

It was not until October 2015 that he returned for his first race in 16 years, surprising himself with a walk of 108 miles in 24 hours in the '24 The Hard Way' race in Oklahoma City. He was fired up once again and willing to challenge himself with another Paris-Colmar, even if it was a bit shorter than in the old days, finished in a different city and had been recently rebranded as the Paris-Alsace Classic.

It might have had a new name and format but you still needed to qualify so, in February 2016, he travelled to Europe and started in the 24 Heures de Bourges. Alas he started too fast, suffered mid race in very cold conditions and, with no support crew, eventually retired.

Once again luck was on his side and he was given a wild card for the Paris-Alsace, due to be held in June 2016. He did not disappoint, coming 5th with a time of 59:04:19 for the 425km classic.

2016	5 th	MAJETIC, IVO	USA	425KM	59:04:19	7.19 km/hr
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*Left: Ivo (bib 19) with Florian Letourneau in the early stages of the 2016 Paris-Alsace classic
Right: Ivo with wife Laura and daughter Lucie at the finish line*

Ivo wrote a blow by blow description of the race which I published in our June 2016 Australian Centurion newsletter:

After 17 years, I was back at the start of this prestigious endurance race. In the 1990s, I took part in this race four times and twice I finished in third place. Returning after so many years, preparing in a distant country and dealing with the 8 hour time difference were not easy so my main goal for the race was to finish. I relied on my seven member team, our camping car and another car.

20 of the 27 qualifiers stood at the start of the short prologue in Neuilly-sur-Marne. I walked the prologue easily in 1:26:59 at a pace of 6:00min/km. I finished fourth but this was just a short introduction to the race. The prologue was won by the main favorite, five-time overall winner, Russian Dimitriy Osipov, in 1:19:49.

It rained at the start of the main stage and the annoying never-ending rain accompanied us for the rest of the race. It was this year's trial. From the beginning, I started too fast and until 120km I alternated in the lead with Osipov. Then I visibly slowed down but I still kept a reasonable pace. Even with a decreasing pace, I still walked the initial 100 miles in 19:53, which did not seem too bad. Shortly after that I was passed by Regy, Rouault and Lassalle within 30 minutes and I dropped back to fifth place. As I was tiring, I started to look forward to the two hour break with the pleasant thought of a well deserved rest in a horizontal position. I walked the initial 188.6km in 23:58:19 so I set my personal best for 24 hours for year 2016. But the harder part of the race was just to come.

I left the break at about 45 minutes past midnight so I still had most of the night in front of me. Although I came out partially refreshed, I soon had to face a very uncomfortable sleep crisis. My support team was doing their best but the situation was getting hopeless. I fought the crisis for 5 hours. Belief in reaching the finish line was diminishing fast. The tremendous work of my team and my desire to keep walking this famous race turned to success and I managed to stay on the course. Unfortunately, I had lost 3 hours to the leader Osipov and over 1.5 hours to Regy on fourth place. At the same time, other walkers were closing the gap from behind, led by Eddy Roze. During Friday, sunshine peeked through dark clouds a couple of times but rain always unpleasantly showered us. I was nearing the end of the main stage but was very worried about the upcoming third night. Sleep deprivation was pretty cruel to me. My team had a very hard time supporting me mentally, feeding me and keeping me at a reasonable pace. Finally we reached Epinal in fifth position at 2:55am on the Saturday morning, 1:15 behind fourth placed Regy.

Seven hours later, at the start of the final 56km hilly stage, we were greeted by unpleasant heavy rain. The climb to an altitude of 1150m was strenuous but I did it fine. Then we had to walk down on our tired legs to the Alsace lowlands and head to the finish line in the spectacular city of Ribeauville. Crossing the finish line, I was tired but happy and proud of myself that I finished this marvellous race again - after so many years absence. My final time of 59:03:49 was good enough for fifth overall place with an average speed of 7.2 km/h. Russian Dimitry Osipov won the race for the sixth time, young Emmanuel Lassalle finished in second place 50 minutes behind Dimitriy, and Jean-Marie Rouault, this year's French 24 Hour walk champion, finished third another 4 hours behind. Only 10 walkers reached the finish city.

Ivo had one final race in 2016, returning to France in mid September for the 28 Heures de Roubaix. It was another fine performance, finishing 7th with a distance of **205.323km** (average speed of 7.333 km/hr). But it was not without its own crisis period, with Ivo flagging markedly in the middle stages before rallying and storming home.

And finally to our 2017 Australian Centurions race where once again Ivo produced the goods, winning overall with a 100 mile time of **21:30:55** to be awarded Australian Centurions badge number 71.



Ivo Majetic becomes Australian Centurion 71 in April 2017

Post event, I asked Ivo about his plans for the future. At this stage, he has no firm targets but I am sure we will see him continue to pop up in further big races. I don't think he is ready to retire just yet!

Ivo's profile needs a postscript for another outstanding performance in May 2018, when he competed in the EMU 6 Day Ultramarathon in Balatonfüred, Hungary, coming 3rd overall against a strong field of runners – and he had entered as a walker and was walking! His final distance of **786.744km** is a long way ahead of the official 6 Day Walk world record, which stands at 752km, but as there were no walk judges at the race, Ivo's performance can't be officially recognised.

Ivo's daily distances read impressively: 133km, 158km (291km), 137km (428km), 124km (554km), 122km (676km) and 114km (786km). He set up his huge total with his second day total of 158km.



Ivo (white shirt, on left) in action on Day 2 of the Emu 6 Day Championship (photo Szilvia Osz)

Tim Erickson
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