Mexican wins silver but disqualified from gold.

22 September 2000

REUTERS

Mexican walker Bernardo Segura was left in despair on Friday after he celebrated winning the opening athletics gold of the Sydney Games in the men's 20 km walk only to have the medal wrenched from his grasp.

Segura had already completed his victory lap draped in his national flag after crossing the line just a few metres ahead of Poland's Robert Korzeniowski and was being interviewed on Mexican television when he discovered he had been disqualified.



Mexico's Noe Hernandez
Eric Gaillard / Reuters

The 30-year-old was being congratulated by Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo on the telephone, in front of the cameras, when a judge walked up to him and showed him a red card.

Segura was ruled to have failed to maintain continuous contact with the ground during a spectacular finish which saw the first three home separated by just five seconds.

Korzeniowski, who won gold in the 50 kms walk at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, inherited the gold, winning in one hour 18 minutes 59 seconds, beating the previous Olympic best mark of 1:19:57 set by Czech Jozef Pribilinec in 1988 in Seoul.

Noe Hernandez, also of Mexico, took silver four seconds back. Vladimir Andreyev of Russia, who dropped off the pace early and was never in contention, was awarded the bronze in 1·19:27 Segura had caught Korzeniowski and Hernandez as they were approaching Stadium Australia on a hot, sunny day and passed them in the final straight.

Disqualifications which come into effect after a competitor is warned three times for lifting are a common feature of walk events, often occurring in the final metres.

Korzeniowski, for one, would sympathise with Segura. In 1992 the Pole was disqualified from the Barcelona Olympics 50 kms walk as he entered the stadium while in second place.

"I can't express what I'm feeling," Korzeniowski, who trains in France for most of the year, said on Friday.
"Just one second ago I had the silver and now I've got the gold. I cried when I found out I had won."

Hernandez was bitter about his team mate's disqualification.

"We put pressure on the Polish guy (so we could) win the race," he said. I don't deserve the silver I won the bronze."

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Controversy surrounds result in 20km walk

22 September 2000

The first athletics gold medal of the 2000 Olympic Games has been awarded to Poland's Robert Korzeniowski in controversial circumstances. The apparent winner of the men's 20km walk, Bernardo Segura (MEX) was disqualified after he crossed the line in first place.



Poland's Robert Korzeniowski
Gary Hershorn / Reuters

After a long deliberation, the gold medal was awarded to Korzeniowski after Segura was judged to have lost contact with the ground during the final stages of the walk.

Mexico's Bernardo Segura completed the men's 20-kilometre walk in Olympic record time and collapsed to the ground in joy at his supposed victory.

Joy turned to consternation as officials indicated there may be a problem.

Segura won a close battle with Poland's Robert Korzeniowski to cross the line in an unofficial one hour 18 minutes 47 seconds, beating the previous best Olympic mark of 1·19.57 set by Czech Jozef Pribilinec in 1988 in Seoul.

Noe Hernandez of Mexico took the silver medal, while Russia Vladimir Andreyev was awarded the bronze medal.

Segura, 30, won bronze in Atlanta four years ago.

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