

JUDGING HIGH SCHOOL RACE WALK EVENTS

by

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(Adapted from the USATF Race Walk Officiating Handbook -2007)

A. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE.

High school race walk competitions require a set of officials who are trained to determine the legality of competitors through the enforcement of the rules of race walking. Race walking judges ensure fairness for all walkers by disqualifying competitors who are not race walking within these rules. Judges have the sole authority to determine the fairness or unfairness of walking and their collective decisions are final in this regard.

The basic rules and procedures of judging high school 1500m or 1600m race walks are the same as those of local, national and international competitions, however, some modifications to procedures are necessary due to the short distances involved, and for dual and quad meets where there are not sufficient officials, procedures must be altered. Suggestions are made for both.

B. RACE WALKING RULES

1. Definition of Race Walking: Race Walking is defined as a progression of steps so taken that the walker makes contact with the ground so that no visible (to the human eye) loss of contact occurs. The advancing leg must be straightened (i.e., not bent at the knee) from the moment of first contact with the ground until the leg is in the vertical upright position.

Note: The definition's two clauses (continuous contact and a straightened leg until the vertical position) differentiate race walking from running. Race walking is known as the "heel and toe" event. The heel of the lead leg must make contact before the rear leg toes off. It is understood that the advancing leg is the lead leg and that straightening occurs at heel contact when the leg is in support. If this is not clear, simultaneously compare a race walker and a runner striding next to each other. The differences are readily evident.

Note: A progression of steps implies enough steps to view more than one instant of contact or knee extension; two to three strides (four to six steps). A decision made for just one stride is poor judging, particularly when a walker has scuffed the track or an uneven surface, or has been bumped by a competitor and slightly loses balance for one stride. Repeat occurrences of such steps to gain an advantage should be acted on by the judge.

2. Cautions: Athletes may be cautioned by any judge when, by their mode of progression, they are in danger of failing to comply with the definition of race walking; but they shall not be given a second caution by one and the same judge for the same offense.

Each judge shall use a yellow paddle for signaling cautions. Each paddle should have the symbol ~ indicating "Loss of Contact" on one side and the symbol > indicating "Bent Knee" on the reverse side to show the reason for the caution.

Note: Competitors do not have to be cautioned if their mode of progression violates the definition of race walking. However, it is customary to give the athlete the opportunity to correct if they are illegal.

3. Red Cards (Disqualification Proposals): When a judge observes a competitor who fails to comply with the definition, he issues a red card, or proposal for disqualification. Red cards should be passed to a Recorder as soon as possible. If there is no Recorder, the red card should be given to the Chief Judge. All

judges should record their proposals on their Judge's Tally Sheet.

4. Disqualification. When red cards from three different judges have been sent to the recorder or chief judge on the same competitor, that competitor is disqualified and should be notified of this disqualification by the chief judge by signaling the disqualification with a red paddle. Disqualified competitors shall leave the track.

Note: Notification of disqualification may occur after the event's conclusion

C. JUDGING PROFICIENCY

1. Observe & Decide. A race walking judge's proficiency increases as he develops his powers of observation. There are many physical movements, especially when the walker becomes fatigued, that may result in illegal walking. It must always be remembered, that the only reason a race walking judge makes a decision is because the judge has observed a violation of the definition of race walking (loss of contact or bent knee). Judging decisions should be made based only on observations of continuous contact and straightened knees over four or more steps, disregarding any other motion.

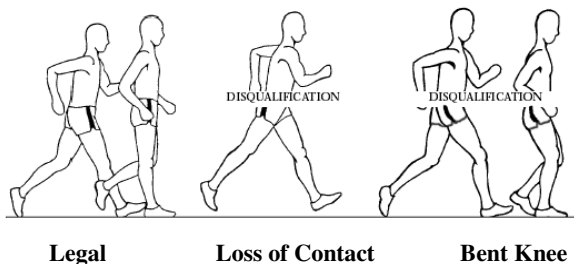


Fig. 1: Examples of legal walking, and illegal walking due to visible loss of contact and bent knees.

2. Independent Decisions. All race walking judges operate independently, including the Chief Judge, and should not discuss the competition with others; spectators, coaches, other officials, and in particular the other race walk judges. Judges should not compare notes nor should they view the Disqualification Posting Board until after the conclusion of the competition. Proficiency is not measured by how many red cards have been issued.

D. JUDGING ROLES

1. Number of Judges: For track events, it is standard to have five judges; a Chief Judge and four Associates. For major events three non-judging officials are added; a

Recorder and Disqualification Board Operator who assist with Red Cards; and a Chief Judge's Assistant, who does not give cautions nor issue red cards; who only notifies disqualified contestants of their disqualification.

2. Role of the Chief Judge. The Chief Judge (Judge #1) supervises the overall judging of the event. The Chief Judge assigns the other judges to positions on the track and may reposition them to insure adequate coverage at the start and finish on the track. When there is no Chief Judge's Assistant, the Chief Judge is responsible for notifying disqualified competitors. The Chief will collect red cards when there is no Recorder.

3. Extraordinary Power to the Chief Judge. When a competitor exhibits total disregard for the rules of walking and gains an unfair advantage in qualifying events, or major championships, state associations may give the Chief Judge authority to disqualify competitors in the last 100m without previous Red Cards. In this situation, the Chief does not judge earlier parts of the race, and a 5th Associate Judge must be added. The Chief Judge then supervises the race up to the last 100m.

How does the Chief make this type of call? Competitors that break into a run change their gait distinctively. A competitor who starts running:

- Clearly flexes (bends) the support leg after contact.
- Runs stiff-legged with total disregard for the contact rule.

E. JUDGING POSITIONS

1. Zone Judging. To ensure adequate coverage the track is divided into four equal zones; each area having 1/2 of a curve and 1/2 of a straightaway. Each judge has a designated area to watch. The judge should move within that zone. The chief judge moves around the track in a clockwise direction. Judges should stay predominantly in the outside lanes, but may move to the inside of the track as needed.

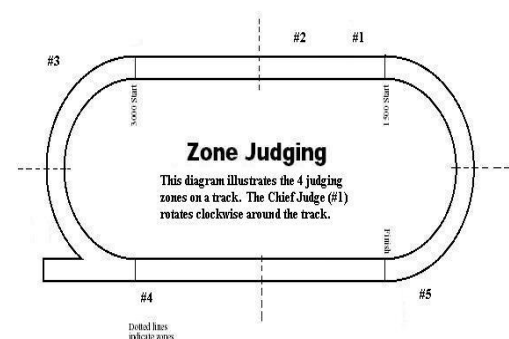


Fig. 2: Judging positions at the start of a 1500m event (400m track).

2. The Start and Finish. Competitors push for position or place at the start and finish. With “zones,” designated judges can assist at the start of the race, and then move to their assigned areas. The judge assigned to the zone that includes the start (#2), the judge assigned to the zone in front of the start (#3) and the Chief Judge (#1) are positioned near the starting line. Towards the end of a race, the judge in the finish area zone (#5), the judge in the preceding zone (#4), and chief judge (#1) should move to the finish area. The Recorder and the Chief Judge’s Assistant stay near the Disqualification Posting Board at the beginning of the final straightaway.

F. THE JUDGE’S VIEWING AREA

Race Walk judging decisions to caution or to issue red cards must be based on observations made within the judge’s own viewing area, within their assigned zone on the track, and not from observations made of the competition from other areas of the track.

1. A Clear View. A judge should position himself to allow a clear view of the legs of the competitors. In a track event, the ideal position is to the outside lanes, so that the inner-raised curb will not block the view of the contact points. It may be necessary to move to the inside of the track to get another viewing angle to confirm a bent knee before making a call.

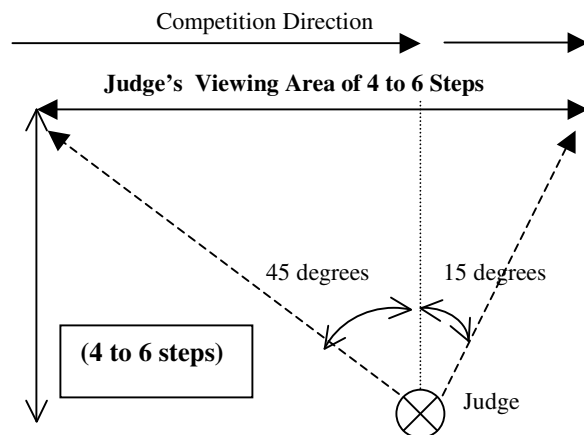


Fig. 3: The Judge’s “Viewing Area” of a progression of steps

2. Ideal Vantage Point. It is not possible to make accurate calls standing close to competitors. To judge a progression of 4 to 6 steps within the viewing area, the judge must stand 4 to 6 steps away from the competitors. From that ideal vantage point, it is not necessary to kneel or to get close to the track surface to judge. Decisions to act may not be made from great distances such as from across the track. A Judge should never lie on the track nor run along side the competitors while judging. Lastly, the walker should not be judged directly from the front or the rear.

Race Walkers are most likely to be illegal during the acceleration at the start, when passing another walker, in the middle of a group, and during the finishing sprint immediately before the finish line.

G. HOW TO MAKE RACE WALK JUDGING DECISIONS

1. The Best Way to Decide. To make a decision, the race walk judge must develop a method. Top USA judges use the following sequence in making judgments. They first look at an approaching group from a distance for motions that distinguish individuals from the group. As the group approaches, they look for more specific indicators. Not paying attention to the rest of the competitors, the experienced judge then looks more closely at those walkers in his viewing area who attracted his attention. Lastly, judgments and possible decisions are made based solely on the competitor’s adherence to the definition of race walking within that judge’s viewing area.

2. Indicators That May Attract the Race Walk Judge’s Attention: While observing groups of competitors outside the viewing area, the race walk judge looks for competitors who appear to be jogging, shuffling or bobbing up and down; they may be bent kneed or loosing contact. They look obviously out of the “norm” and need closer scrutiny. As those athletes enter the viewing area, the judge should look for these indicators:

- Over striding and under striding that may lead to loss of contact or bent knee.
- High back kick after toe-off that may lead to loss of contact.
- High forward knee drive that may raise the body’s center of mass and lead to loss of contact.
- A too high an arm swing and/or lifting of the shoulders that may pull the body up and off the ground leading to loss of contact

If any of these techniques are observed the Judge should watch the competitor more closely to decide if a decision is required.

3. Contact THEN Straightening: To make a judgment, first look to determine if contact has been maintained (double contact), and then look to determine if the support leg has been straightened at the knee. Some athletes take longer to straighten their knees than others and may not look “straight” at contact.

Note: Looking for contact first lets these walkers straighten. Knee straightening for most race walkers is a flowing process: as weight is put on their support leg at contact, the knee glides into a locked position.

When a decision is made to “red card” a competitor, it must be based on the definition of race walking and not the earlier indicators that brought attention to the competitor. If in doubt give the benefit to the athlete.

4. Visible Loss of Contact: A red card (proposal for disqualification) for visible loss of contact is given when a judge sees the rear foot of the competitor leave the ground before the front foot makes contact with the ground. Lack of continuous contact is visible when the rear toe and front heel are both off of the ground at the same time.

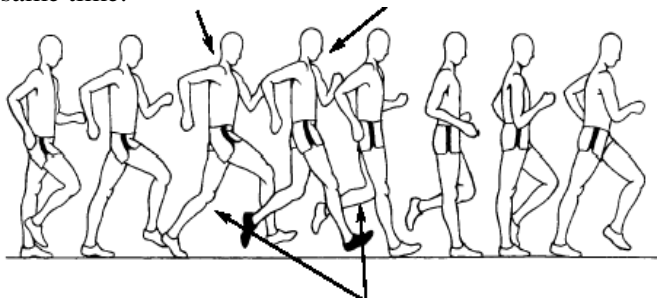


Fig. 3: Visible loss of contact (arrows should point to darkened feet).

5. Contact Cautions. A judge may give a caution for potential loss of contact when loss of contact is not clearly evident. The following techniques may lead to loss of contact:

- Continued extension of the ankle after toe off, when the rear foot is lifted from the ground.
- First contact with the ground made with a flat foot.
- First contact with the ground made under the body.
- Extreme forward lean that places the torso in front of the lead foot at contact with the ground.

6. Bent Knee: Red cards for bent knee are given when a judge sees either of two technique flaws:

- Bending (flexion) of the support leg at the knee when weight is put on it. Flexion of the leg is marked by long contractions of the muscles at the front of the thigh (*eccentric contraction* of the *quadriceps*).
- Flexion of the support leg at the knee when in single stance, at any point after contact with the ground before the leg reaches the vertical position. (Also marked by eccentric contraction of the “quads.”)

Note. When the leg is straightened at the knee, the knee should lock and remain locked until the vertical position. The quadriceps remains relaxed. If the knee is allowed to flex (bend or “buckle”) when weight is put on it, the quads must contract and stretch to avoid falling. The competitor will look like she is running, exhibiting an

up-and-down jogging style. This illegal technique is shown in this illustration.

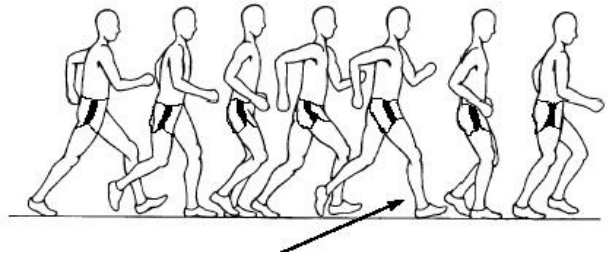


Fig. 4: Bent Knees.

7. Bent Knee Caution. The Judge may give a caution for potential bent knee when contraction or relaxation of the support leg’s front thigh muscles cannot clearly be seen or when the walker appears to be walking very stiff legged.

Note: Cautions and red cards for bent knees should not be given if the athlete hyper-extends the leg at the knee, is bowlegged, has large thighs, or has protruding knees. Do not look to see if the leg is “straight” but rather look to see if the leg has straightened at the knee.

H. ACTING ON JUDGEMENTS

1. Time for Correction. As a judge, act once a decision is made. Do not wait to give a caution or red card. Keep in mind that you are part of a panel, and the system of cautions and red cards is for the athlete’s benefit. A signal with the yellow paddle and the posting of red cards in championship races gives the competitor a chance to correct before disqualification. A caution or a single red card does not hurt an athlete. It should help.

2. Collective Action. A judge’s independent decision only affects the athlete negatively if a collective decision reaches the same conclusion. Keep in mind that competitors may be cautioned by all of the judges without disqualification. If two or more other race walk judges see what you see, an athlete violating the definition of race walking, then the collective, but independent, panel should ensure the fairness of the competition for all.

I. GIVING CAUTIONS.

1. The Purpose of Cautions: Cautions are for the benefit of the athlete. The role of a judge when cautioning is to make the competitor aware that the judge considers her in danger of a violation and that if she does not pay attention to her technique, she may

violate the definition and the judge may write a red card on her. Cautions do not count against competitors. They are simply advice to the athlete.

2. Using the Yellow Paddle: The primary method of cautioning is with the yellow paddle. To caution a competitor, the judge should:

- Make eye contact with the athlete
- Point to the athlete.
- Show the paddle so the athlete sees the infraction that she is being cautioned for.

3. Verbal Cautions: When it is not possible to show the competitor a paddle, or when paddles are not available, cautions may be given verbally by calling the athlete’s number and stating only:

- “loss of contact,” or
- “bent knee”

For example: “Number 16 – CAUTION – bent knee.”

All other verbal communication is to be avoided. Saying more, i.e., having a discussion with the competitor about which leg is in danger of not straightening, or when you observed the infraction is not appropriate, and may be construed as coaching.

4. Multiple Cautions: A judge may issue cautions for both contact and bent knee. In short track races such instances should be an exception. Judges may not give repeated cautions for the same infraction.

5. Missed Cautions. It is not professional to “run down” a competitor to give a caution. If necessary, wait until the athlete passes again to give it. If in the meantime, the competitor has corrected and is no longer in danger, and is not in need of a caution, do not give her the caution you were waiting for. It will only confuse the athlete.

Cautions that have been shown or verbalized to the competitor must be recorded on the individual Judge’s Tally Sheet. If you had decided to give a caution, but could not (as in the situation above), and did not, cross off any notations you made.

J. RED CARDS: Proposing Disqualification.

1. Issuing Red Cards. When a judge sees that a competitor is clearly in violation of the definition of race walking a Red Card should be issued.

To speed up the process, judges should write their judge’s number and name on the red cards before the event begins. If they have pre-numbered cards, they

must make sure all the cards have the same number. All cards must be signed, so they may do so before the event as well.

When a judge issues a red card, the following information is recorded on the card:

- competitor number
- reason for the red card
- time of day

The illustration in Figure 5, shows a red card given by Judge #2 to Competitor #1 for bent knee at 10:18

RACE WALK JUDGE NUMBER	2
RED CARD (PROPOSAL FOR DISQUALIFICATION)	
COMPETITOR NUMBER	1
LOSS OF CONTACT ~	~
BENT KNEE >	
TIME OF DAY	10:18
NAME: CAREFUL OBSERVER	
SIGNATURE: <i>Careful Observer</i>	

Fig. 5: Judge 2’s Red Card for Loss of Contact.

2. Timely DQ Proposals. Red Cards should be sent to the Recorder at the DQ Posting Board as soon as possible, so that with timely posting, the competitor might have the chance to correct without being issued more cards against her. A system of card collectors may be employed.

3. Prior Cautioning. Judges do not have to caution a competitor before issuing a red card. With the sense of preventive officiating at the philosophical core of high school officiating, it may helpful to simultaneously caution competitors (particularly novices) when only a red card is warranted. Doing so may get the walker to correct and survive the race.

Note: Most race walkers do not cheat; they get carried away, however, if you feel a walker has abandoned all

intent of walking fairly, go directly to the red card, and forget about giving her the courtesy of a caution.

4. When there is no DQ Board. In races that do not use a DQ Posting Board or card collectors, all red cards should be passed to the chief judge as soon as possible. (In this situation, the Chief Judge can not act independently and must not be swayed by the number of cards issued on any particular athlete). The chief judge may want to notify competitors that they have received a red card. The judge that issued it should not be identified to the competitor.

5. Only One Card. Judges may issue only one red card per athlete! Once the judge issues a red card on a competitor, the judge may not make further decisions (neither cautions nor red cards) on that athlete. The judge must disregard her. If competitors continue to violate the definition of race walking, further red cards and disqualification becomes the responsibility of the remaining members of the judging crew.

K. RECORDING RACE WALK DECISIONS

1. Judges' Tally Sheets: Each judge is responsible for recording the decisions they make to caution or issue red cards on a judge's tally sheet. The tally sheet must include the judge's number, name and must be signed.

Notations of all judging decisions must include the following:

- The competitor's bib number
- The reason for the call
- The time of day the decision was acted on

2. Judge's Responsibility. It is the judge's responsibility to accurately and thoroughly record his decisions. A competitor's number should appear only once on the tally sheet. Check during the race to see that you have not entered it twice. For races using hip numbers, pre numbering the card has proven helpful. Please keep in mind, judges must write legibly.

3. Use the Correct Column. Decisions are recorded in two columns; cautions left of center and red cards on the right. Cautions should not be considered red cards after the fact, so it is important to use the correct column.

In the following example, Judge 2 pre-numbered his card. He gave Competitor 1 a caution for contact two minutes before issuing her a red card. He also issued a red card to competitor # 4 without giving a caution. From the time on the tally sheet, the card may have been written at the end of the race, when a caution would have served no purpose.

JUDGE 2	COMPETITION: NYSPHSAA Indoor Champs.	
	EVENT: <u>1500m</u>	
	MALE: ___ FEMALE: <u>X</u>	

~ : Loss of Contact > : Bent Knee

Competitor #	Caution (In Danger)			Red Cards (Illegal)		
	~	>	Time Told	~	>	Time
1	~		10:13	~		10:15
2	~		10:12	~		10:18
3						
4					>	10:19

NAME:	CAREFUL OBSERVER
SIGNATURE:	<i>Careful Observer</i>

Fig. 6: Judge's Tally Sheet (abbreviated size).

Notes concerning athletes the judge had concerns about should be made in the margins or on the back of the sheet and marked over. The tally sheet should be signed and turned in to the recorder at the event's conclusion.

L. THE RECORDER

1. Duties of the Recorder. The recorder works with the chief judge and is vital especially during a major race. The Recorder receives all red cards from the Judges and accurately records red cards onto the Judges' Summary Sheet. The recorder informs the DQ Board Operator of red cards for each athlete so they may be posted. In smaller competitions, the recorder may post the red cards on the Board. The Recorder notifies the Chief Judge or Chief Judge's Assistant when a competitor has received three red cards from three different judges, and is disqualified. The Recorder must organize the red cards so that they can be reviewed before notification is given.

2. The Judge's Summary Sheet. The recorder fills in the following information on the Judges' Summary Sheet before the start of the race: name of event, date,

name of chief judge, name of recorder, race start time, and the judges' names listed by position.

3. Accuracy is a Must. The Judges' Summary Sheet is the official "score sheet" of the judging of the race. As red cards are submitted to the recorder, the reason for the card and the time it was written is both recorded in the judge's column to the right of competitor's number.

Race Walk Summary Sheet RED CARDS ONLY		Date: 03/04/2008
Event: NYSPHSAA	Chief Judge: Carey Grant	Recorder: Writes Clearly
Distance: 1500M		

~ : Loss of Contact > : Bent Knee

Comp #	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3	Judge 4	Judge 5	DQ's
1	10:14	10:15	10:13			3
	~	~	~			~ ~ ~
2		10:18			10:17	2
		~			~	~ ~
3						
4		10:19				1
		>				>

Fig. 8: Judges' Summary Sheet (Abbreviated)

In the example in Figure 8, Competitor 1 was disqualified with three red cards for loss of contact. The others did not receive red cards from three judges and were not disqualified.

The time cards were written by judges helps coaches and others to reconstruct the race afterwards to see when walkers got into "trouble" with the judges. Accuracy therefore is a must.

A further check for accuracy is made after the event by the Recorder. All individual Judges' Tally Sheets are collected and red card tallies are compared to the red cards actually passed to the Recorder.

Note: In longer track and road events, cautions are also added to the Summary Sheet to get a clearer picture of the judging. Recording cautions will show judges who were "close to" carding athletes but did not advance to Red Cards

M. THE DISQUALIFICATION POSTING BOARD

1. Purpose. The primary reason for the board is to

inform competitors of the number of red cards that have been issued. It is recommended that the board should be placed at the start of the final straightaway so that each competitor can easily view the board when she passes. Neither the recorder nor Disqualification Board Operator should block its view by competitors. Allowing carded walkers to see the marks against them is similar to fouls being called in field events; where contestants are given opportunities to correct their technique.

2. Board Construction. D.Q. Posting Boards may be as simple as poster board with columns for competitor numbers, with space next to it for showing number of Red Cards. Figure 9 is a diagram of a simply designed board displaying the red cards issued in the race summarized in Figure 8

D.Q. Posting Board					
1	~ ~ ~	4	>	7	
2	~ ~	5		8	
3		6		9	

Fig. 9. DQ Posting Board.

3. Operation. The Recorder should work closely with the Board Operator. As the red card comes in to the Recorder, the Judges' Summary Sheet is marked and the number of the offending athlete is given to the D.Q. Board Operator. A mark, such as a red cross, "X" or large red dot, or the infraction symbols (~ : Loss of Contact > : Bent Knee) is placed next to the athlete's number to designate one Red Card. As the athlete receives a second card, a second mark is put next to the athlete's number. When a third red card comes to the recorder, the recorder rechecks to make sure that 3 separate judges have proposed disqualification before passing it to the board operator for posting. The recorder gives the three red cards to the chief judge or chief judge's assistant, who notifies the athlete of disqualification and requests the athlete to leave the track.

Note. Athletes should continue walking until notified of their disqualification.

N. DUAL MEET PROCEDURES

1. Modifications of Rules and Procedures. When officials work dual meets and there are only two officials available to judge the race walk, standard operating rules for officiating the race walk as outlined above, must be

altered so that illegal competitors will be disqualified. State Associations may authorize the following changes to disqualify illegal race walkers when there are fewer than five Judges assigned to a dual or double dual meet. These alterations should not be used for invitational and championship events.

2. When Two Officials are Assigned. When there are only two officials, a starter/referee and a finish judge; two red cards will be required for disqualification. If both judges, acting independently write red cards on a competitor, that competitor is disqualified.

3. When There Are Three or Four Officials. A majority of the judges working the event must independently issue red cards to disqualify; i.e. 2 out of 3, or 3 out of 4 to disqualify.

4. Judging Roles: The starter/referee should be the chief race walk judge. The chief judge should instruct the competitors that they must use a race walk gait throughout the event, and that they will be informed of any red cards and possible disqualification at the event's conclusion.

5. Judging Zones: The system of judging zones employed when there are five judges suggests that it is acceptable to look for competitors outside the norm of race walking who are not in your judging zone, but that the judge must wait until the competitor is in their zone to make a decision. In dual-meet situations, in particular when there are only two or three judges, a judge who observes clearly visible infractions from competitors outside of their zone, may issue red cards for those infractions.

a.) When there are two judges:

- Each judge should be responsible for one half of the track.
- Each judge should be responsible for one turn, and their part of both straight-a-ways.
- Judges may position themselves on the infield so they may have a clear view of the competition.
- If judges are mobile enough, they may move to the outside of the track to view the competitors.
- Both judges should observe the finish straight away, and should move closer together to observe sprints to the finish

b.) When there are three or four judges:

- The chief judge should use the Zone Method discussed earlier.
- The chief judge should observe from the center of the track, moving to each straight-a-way as the opportunity merits.
- A majority of the judges, including the chief should be on the final straight-a-way.

6. Running in Race Walking Events: In dual meet competitions, competitors who break into a run gain an unfair advantage so they may score points for their team. They should not be allowed to score as a race walker. The chief judge, starter/referee who has previously warned all competitors about race walking and not running may disqualify competitors who break into a run to gain an advantage, regardless of the number of red cards issued.

Rest assured that race walkers do not deliberately break the rules. They may be off the ground and lose contact, or they may have difficulty straightening their legs because they are novices. They do not deliberately break into a run, unless they do so to gain an advantage. If the competitor is trying to race walk, judge them according to the rules, knowing that both judges, when there are only two, and a majority of the panel when there are three or four, must observe an infraction to disqualify. However, when the competitor is clearly taking advantage, the chief judge must act to protect the competition and the fairness of the event.

In these situations, the chief judge/referee may disqualify those competitors who have blatantly disregarded their instructions to race walk, regardless of the number of red cards issued.

O. SUMMARY

Race walking judges ensure fairness for all walkers by disqualifying competitors who are not race walking within the rules of race walking. The definition of race walking and the method of judging race walk events are standard through out the world. Modifications to procedures may be made for high school events due to the shortness of high school events. Judging decisions should be based on observations not on guesswork or speculation. Knowing how to make judging calls and the use of proper judging procedures ensures a well judged and fair event.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please feel free to contact Gary Westerfield at garyw@optonline.net

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