Racing and Mobility exercises
✓ The race period is usually done over a 4 week period culminating in a major championship.
✓ The lead up races are essential to establish a “racepace” and also to get the mind, legs and body into race mod.
✓ Most of the training in this period is devoted to maintenance and sharpening up mode. It can still combine circuit training, fartlek, track sessions and the occasional specific speed distance session, however, there should be no accent on overload training sessions.

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Flexibility
Given that a warm up and stretching exercises have been done, an additional 4-5 laps of mobile flexibility ensures proper preparation for racing.

These exercises can also be initiated throughout longer, slower training.

Imagine walking down a straight line and walking with the left foot crossing over that line to the right and visa versa with the right foot. This X-Over action does a number of things. Firstly, it ensures that the athlete lands on a straightened leg.
It is virtually impossible to land on a bent leg while doing this.

Secondly, it ensures that the hip rotation is over extended increasing hip mobility accordingly.

It also helps in pushing off the back leg by virtue of this action increasing rear leg drive and stride length while also reinforcing dual phase contact. It is a great exercise for all young athletes and should be continued throughout an athlete’s career.

While this is being undertaken, the arms can be held in different positions and can markedly alter stride length and hip mobility as it overworks the legs and hips concurrently.

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Some of these are as follows

① Holding arms close across the chest.
② Holding arms outstretched forward in front of you.
③ Arms crossed and held behind the back
④ Arms stretched out to the side at shoulder height
⑤ Swinging the arms across the body holding onto the hands in opposite rhythm to the leg stride
⑥ Arm rotations each side of the body forward and back
⑦ Shoulders rotating backward
⑧ Overstriding
⑨ Walking in figure 8’s. Very tight circles overusing hip rotation and movement on each side.
Stretching exercises
✓ These are to be initiated after a couple of warm-up laps, jogging or walking.
✓ Hold every stretch for up to 10 seconds.
✓ Do not bounce the stretch as (ballistic) stretching can lead to muscle injury.
✓ These are only a few basic stretching exercises that can be undertaken.
① Feet apart, pointing forward, side bends.
② Feet apart pointing forward, flat back stretch
③ Feet apart, toes forward. full squat position
④ Feet apart, toes forward, side lunge
⑤ Feet apart, toes forward, pushing hips forward, arch back
⑥ Neck rotations around side to side (not back)
⑦ Hands clasped above the head, stretched back and down to the sides
⑧ Trunk rotation, turn hips. Stretched down flat back
⑨ Trunk rotation to the side hands clasped above the head
⑩ Feet apart facing forward, lunge and push hips
11) Feet apart facing forward, lunge and straighten legs with head down to knees, both legs straight
12) Sitting with legs apart, stretch down head to knee to each leg
13) Groin stretch, feet together, push knees toward ground
14) Sitting down legs apart, push chest to ground
15) P.N.F.Hamstring stretches
16) Lying on back, bring knees to chest
17) Lying on back, bring foot and knee parallel to chest
18) Lying on back, bring knee up and across to opposite shoulder
19) Lying on side, pull foot back and push away, still holding onto foot.
20) Standing up, swing knee to opposite shoulder and hands swing in opposite direction.

There are a few here and obviously many, many more that can be used.
Common Injuries
One of the most common injuries that racewalkers encounter is “shin splints”, however, in walkers it occurs on the outside of the tibia (anterior tibialis syndrome).

This is a tightness and an aggravation of the tendon leading to the anterior tibialis muscle developed from pushing the heel to the ground and raising the lead foot on landing.

It is compounded by tight calves and needs massage of the calves and stretching with light work.

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✓ Speed work induced tight hamstrings can lead to soreness of the attachment right in under the buttocks.

✓ Again, massage and rest with stretching, once the soreness factor has decreased, the answer.

✓ In the case of an athlete having a “lordotic” back there appears to be a greater increase of numbers of athletes with sore lower back issues. This is compounded with a reduced stride length quite commonly.

✓ The tilt of the pelvis from under needs to be worked on with posture and a great deal of stretching of the lower back needs to be undertaken.
Foot issues are rare, however, in the case of sore feet, care and selection should be taken in choosing the right shoes for your feet.

There are a multitude of shoes available in the marketplace, some with straight last and some with curved and slightly curved last soles.

As the foot predominantly wears the shoe on the heel, ball and toe, the shoe must be flexible but firm, an even thickness throughout the sole and light enough to not create its own issues with extra weight being brought through with each stride.
✓ Make sure that the shoe fits the foot, not the other way round.
✓ Upper body issues and core strength are usually caused through a lack of upper body strength.
✓ Most athletes’ legs are well conditioned and trained and as marathon runners are usually legs and lungs men.
✓ Walkers need a strong upper body to maintain momentum and technique throughout a race.
Notes for a Coach
Always ensure that the athlete is well informed regarding training and expected outcomes. Empower your athlete with not only what you want done, but why. Give them an understanding of the sport. Who knows, at the end their career, they may end wanting to be a coach.

Monitor your athletes’ diet ensuring that they have an adequate intake of a “balanced mix” of carbohydrate, protein and vegetables. Regular blood tests will show deficiencies in Iron for example.

Allow flexibility on all training sessions, monitoring and checking verbally just how each individual athlete is coping with the session. There are many factors that influence a young athlete’s attitude and training demeanor, eg. School work / exams, other recreational activities, family issues, peer pressures etc etc.
 ✓ Be aware and adjust those sessions accordingly. They have a long career as an athlete and need our full support as coaches.

 ✓ When travelling to competitions, use a checklist that the athlete can go through to ensure that they have not overlooked anything in their race gear, travel requirements. The onus is on them, however they do need to be reminded … often.

 ✓ Use a diary, both for athletes and coaches, as this reinforces the need for planning and preparation and review.

 ✓ Remember: “Those who fail to Plan, usually Plan to Fail”
Gain an understanding of the Human Body and its muscular makeup. If you have not been an athlete, then find the time to understand the biomechanics of racewalking and the muscles that work and how they work. This will ensure some empathy with the athlete when trying to understand any niggles or minor injuries that an athlete may encounter.

Get to know your athlete, eg ... how many brothers and sisters they have, their birthdates, celebrate their birthdays, find out what else makes up the person that you are coaching. Remember that these are extraordinary people with an extraordinary talent.
✓ I firmly believe that if you give even 5 % input into a child’s development, you will receive a 95 % return. Just because you have shown them that you really care. They need to know that they are special.

✓ Make training “FUN”, especially for the young athlete, developing in their sport.

✓ That’s why they are there in the first place.

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