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20KM TO DISAPPEAR IN LATEST WA RACE WALK CHANGES U20 10,000m knocked back to 5000m for World champs

In its press release of 5 December, the World Athletics Council announced its latest round of rejigging of international race walking events, effective January 1, 2026 ... and the changes will come as another emotional body blow to lovers of the sport and its history. OUT are the 20 and 35 kilometres road walks and the Under 20 10,000m track walk. In their places, respectively, are the **Half-marathon walk (21.0975km)**, the **full Marathon walk (42.195km)** and the **U20 5,000m track walk**. The changes to the two road walks, while confronting for many, aren't totally without appeal. The U20 change is harder to justify.

By now, the majority of us have come – however grudgingly – to accept that change is inevitable if race walking is to survive as a bona fide international event and not be relegated to whatever domestic backwaters will accommodate it. I grew up appreciating the traditional 20km and 50km walking races and was motivated to train hard to be part of them when the time came. The progression in the 20km (since 1956) and 50km (since 1932) road walks saw the sport blossom in terms of speed and endurance. This was certainly true at the Olympics, with records, engrossing attritional battles and surprise outcomes contributing to a folklore that thrilled many of us.

The 50km – a victim of its length, media disapproval and inability to meet IOC-decreed gender balance indicators – was retired after the 2021 Olympics and has not been raced internationally since. Now it's the 20's turn to go, at least from WA competition¹. Naturally, we all wanted the 20km and 50km to endure (as it were) into the future for coming generations, not least because they were *ours*. Those classic distances identified our sport, had their own mathematical timing and performance markers, and came to define walking's performance history and heritage, with their own sets of world records, as distinct from those of running races.

The battles fought by walkers worldwide with the IAAF and, later, World Athletics to keep the 50km on the calendar provided material that could fill a 100 page volume of *Heel & Toe* issues. Sadly, the 50's proven record as an endurance test wasn't enough to save it in a commercial world where time is money, nor was the 35km ever really going to be a credible substitute (although it was better than nothing.)

If World Athletics thinking is along the lines of making race walking more relevant for athletics consumers (i.e. spectators and sponsors), then doing away with multiples of kilometres in favour of an instantly relatable word like 'marathon' or 'half-marathon' could be a sound move. In the latter's favour is the fact that it's just a tad under 2000m further than the 20km anyway, so those training for specific 20km goals at this time can still do so. I'm in favour of trying it, provided that the 20km current and past world records are still recognised, as are those of the 50km. Those old landmarks should still have a place at the table.

As for a 'Marathon' walk ... to those reacting with 'Why not just bring back the 50km?', I sympathise from a heritage point of view. But it's not going to happen. We're not a large or powerful enough bloc to make it happen. The marathon distance is just over 7km further on than the 35km, and much can occur in that deceptively short stretch. It's often said, correctly, that a 50km never really started until 35k. While this won't be the same, it should be a bit more of an endurance test for walkers than

¹ We don't know yet what the IOC's decision for Los Angeles 2028 will be - 20km or half-marathon.

the 35. How much more is yet to be seen. And, inevitably, the results of top walkers against those of some of the marathon runners would be compelling to see.²

Professional, not traditional

“Until the Race walks put on their business hats and remember this is no longer amateur but professional money making sports (sic), with sadness Racewalks on the international athletics stage is on borrowed time.”³

The above quote is in a reply to a discussion thread on Simon Baker’s Facebook page, in the wake of the December 5 announcement. What appears to have spurred the remark is a degree of exasperation at the negativity expressed in short order at the changes, prompting a kind of call by the writer to ‘get real, guys.’ It’s hard to argue with the sentiment or the logic.

The amateur days, while still alive at club level, are gone forever for the top athletes. Race walkers want, and should have, their place among the elite runners, throwers and jumpers of the world, with the same opportunities to gain financially from their efforts. The top walkers, and their coaches, know that they move in an environment of demands dictated by powerful commercial forces and in which media and sponsorship are major players. The walkers show all the dedication, do all the work and make all the sacrifices exhibited by other elite sportsmen and women. If their racing distances are now to be market-driven, should we not aim to have input in those decisions so that walkers get the best possible deal?

Change is afoot. We can seek to be part of it, to use it to our advantage, or cry ‘tradition’ and let change overwhelm us on its terms – to our cost. This doesn’t mean we should lie down and accept measures that are clearly against the interests of walkers or the sport, without a fight. But our case should be well considered and grounded in realities, and presented in a way that doesn’t expose us as obstructionist. Tradition that no longer serves the needs of its adherents in a world that demands sporting professionalism, is best laid to rest. Stubbornly to stick to what has gone before because that’s how it’s been since whenever and not to countenance any revision is to invite – at the highest level, certainly, and indeed lower down – race walking’s extinction.

Speaking of which ...

A more critical issue

We should all remember that a far more serious matter for us is race walking’s acceptance as a sport at all in this Age of the Phonecam, and the derision and open hostility to it out there among the great uninformed. The number of times still photos or ‘slow-mo’ clips of a walker with both feet off the ground appear in the media – accompanied more often than not by shrill calls of ‘See? They’re all cheating!’⁴ and worse – makes one want to seize every culprit and make them write out TR54.7.1 until they cry ‘Okay! Naked eye judging! I get it, I get it!’ (Even that wouldn’t convince many of those raised on a diet of DRS reviews in sports. They’d just call us emperors with no clothes.)

The situation reminds me of a scene from the classic Japanese film *Seven Samurai*, in which a village of farmers debates hiring samurai to protect them from bandits. “But, Grandad,” one of them moans to the village patriarch, “I’m worried about our daughters. They’re crazy about samurai.” At this, the old man bridles. “Fool! Why worry about your beard, when your head’s about to be taken?” In a world of tabloid and social media populism, there are plenty eyeing race walking’s neck (and feet) with evil eyes and sharp swords. Bigger problems exist for us to fix than how many more or fewer kilometres we race.

The U20 10,000m becomes 5000m. Why?

The second part of the WA announcement – to replace the 10,000m walk at the World Athletics U20 championships with a 5000m race – is both disappointing and puzzling. Walkers aged 18 and 19 stand at the cusp of advancement to the senior ranks, which is where they can expect to race either over 20km or a Half-marathon distance internationally for the first time. The 10,000m – like the 10km, its road counterpart in the WA Teams walks championships – is an essential stepping stone to those distances. As it is, the leap from 10km to 20km is itself a challenging one, more so if the Half-marathon replaces the 20. Late teens walkers should be given more opportunities to compete over 10,000m for their countries, not fewer.

Furthermore, a 5000m track race with a congested field of up to 40 late-teen walkers, many going at under 4:00 per kilometre, would be a judging nightmare and a sitting duck for negative publicity. A 10,000m will have a fast and even technically rough start before everyone settles down and the field stretches out over 25 laps. Those in a 5000m field, desperate to be among the leaders all the way, will find rule compliance almost impossible and likely throw caution to the wind – not from an intent to cheat but to compete, which is why their countries sent them in the first place.

No explanation has been given by the World Athletics Council for the change, leaving observers and stakeholders to draw their own conclusions. The WA U20 10,000m walk is a track race, occupying up to 55 minutes of stadium time, and no other track event can commence until the last competitor has finished. It may be that this is unacceptable to organisers as well as to TV networks, who’ve probably exercised some leverage. Another cause may be a lopsidedness in participation per region, but this seems an unlikely reason as 24 countries were represented in the Men’s event and 26

² I don’t favour holding the Marathon walk concurrently with the Marathon run, as has been suggested, either from a judging perspective or in the interests of the competition. Walkers unable to beat even slower runners would, I believe, be compared unfavourably and unfairly, handing yet another weapon to its attackers. Our races on our courses, please.

³ <https://www.facebook.com/simon.baker.7946281>

⁴ Is race walking the only sport in which spectators are unable (or unwilling) to tell the difference between rule breaking and cheating?

in the Women's in Lima this year. The distribution of results may have favoured the usual strong nations from Europe, Asia and South America, but this would have been the case regardless of the distance.

Whatever the reason, by shortening the U20 distance World Athletics has short-changed the athletes and failed to aid them in their progression. If excessive track occupation time was the issue (and it seems the only credible one), this could have been solved via scheduling, or by holding the events ex-stadia. It's to be hoped that strong representations are made to the WA Council to reconsider, reinforcing the need for suitable and workable pathways to senior racing to be provided internationally at this crucial age, and that the Council heeds the call.

Stu Cooper

(Note: For another appraisal of the latest WA changes to walking, see the article reprinted from the blog *O Marchador* on Page 8.)

**** WALKER OF THE WEEK ****



(Photo: AV)



(Photo: Athletics SA)



(Photo: Newcastle Weekly)

The major meet around the country over the last week was the AA All Schools T&F championships in Brisbane, and it was action in hot conditions at the QSAC facility that provided this week's three deserving WsOTW: **Max Davidson (VIC)**, **Angelina Legrand (SA)** and **Callum Martin (NSW)**.

Angelina, contesting the U18 5000m on Friday, was the first to put her endurance to the test in the sweltering heat. Forsaking any temptation to go out hard early, she bided her time in a pack behind the leaders for a couple of laps before joining them, then leaving them behind as she strode away stylishly to win by nearly a minute in **24:33.12**, in what must be her best result to date after a winter of steady progress under coach Kim Mottrom.

Max's U16 3000m win in a 43-sec PB time of **12:52.19** comes off the back of his first road walking season. While he has had wins in the All Schools before, this emphatic leap in standard demonstrates the strength he has gained in addition to his natural speed. His progress in the coming years will be exciting to watch.

It wasn't a day for PBs on Sunday and it's a credit to **Callum** that he came to within 19 secs of setting one, despite the heat stress that it was evident he was suffering when he finished. His time of **13:49.14** is noteworthy enough in itself for a 13 year old – having done it under such conditions shows a level of grit that is essential to underpin the enormous talent he has.

Well done, Angelina, Max and Callum ... three fine exhibitions of winning racing when the cards aren't all in your favour!

***Honourable mentions**

- **Samuel Lindsay (TAS)** – a huge step up to break 21 minutes for the first time in the All Schools U17 5000m.
- **John Ronan (WA)** and **Riley Coughlan (VIC)** – gold and silver in the U18 5000m in Brisbane, would have approached or broken 20:00 but for falling for the three (red) card trick!
- **Sophie Polkinghorne** and **Matilda Webb (NSW)** – produced what was the duel of the meet with Sophie just prevailing over her talented team mate.



CLUB NEWS and RESULTS



Congratulations to our small squad of Victorian walkers who gave their all at the AA All Schools championships in Brisbane at the weekend. Conditions were generally hot and testing for visiting athletes, but the big 'V' walkers were, as ever, well to the fore with all of their finishers making the podium:

5000m

Riley Coughlan	Silver	Boys U18 5000m	21:12.31
Ariana Pashutina	Silver	Girls U18 5000m	27:44.15

3000m

Max Davidson	Gold	Boys U16 3000m	12:52.19
Mya McClure	Gold	Girls U14 3000m	15:15.35
Hannah Matthews	Silver	Girls U15 3000m	15:11.61
Sara Holmes	Bronze	Girls U16 3000m	15:14.52
Jaime Hvalica	Bronze	Boys U16 3000m	15:38.65
Matilda Read	Bronze	Girls U15 3000m	15:12.23
Lewis McLennan	Bronze	Boys U14 3000m	15:31.19

Commiserations to Mietta and Angus, both committed young athletes who will bounce back!

** Vics in action in Brisbane **



Fran ... a successful coach is a happy one!

(Photos: AV, Alla Pashutina)

**Have you entered yet for next Sunday's VRWC races? – Entries close this Friday at 6pm!*

*Sunday 15 December – Middle Park		
7.00am	Australian 35km C'ship	Open Male
7.00am	Australian 35km C'ship	Open Female
7.00am	AA Inv. 20km Walk	Open Male
7.00am	AA Inv. 20km Walk	Open Female
8.00am	VRWC 10km Walk	U20 Male/Female
9.00am	VRWC 5km Walk	U18 Male/Female
9.00am	VRWC 3km Walk	Open Men/Women

Entries for VRWC races via <https://www.revolutionise.com.au/vrwc/>
 Deadline – Friday 13 December at 6.00pm



QUEENSLAND Australian All Schools T&F championships, 6-8 December – QSAC, Brisbane

While heat and humidity were not insignificant factors in the walks at these championships, the 50 walkers who lined up for their states put up a good showing and some excellent results were achieved.

***Friday 6 December**

The 5000m walkers opened proceedings, with **Angelina Legrand** walking a masterful race to dominate the Girls field for a fine win in a PB of **24:33.12**. Repeating her Melbourne tactic in August of sitting back and taking stock for 1km before forging to the front, Legrand's command of the race once she did take the lead was emphatic. Early leader **Sienna Pitcher**, dropped twice, fought back as she always does to take the U17 title with the only other sub-25:00 time.

The Boys 5000m was dramatic. At the gun, the power trio of **Bailey Housden, John Ronan** and **Riley Coughlan** surged away, with **Sam Lindsay** in close attendance. Housden dropped back at 1200m and Ronan made his move, opening up a substantial break on Coughlan. It appeared all over bar the shouting as the West Australian set out after his first sub-20:00 result, unaware that he'd collected three reds and would have to cool his heels for 30 frustrating seconds. When 'released', he spent a cautious minute settling back into stride, prevailing by a bare 8 secs over Lindsay who walked the race of his life to go sub-21:00 for the U17 title, with Coughlan – who'd had his own spell in the cone castle – crossing 3rd overall.
John Ronan, U18 5000m winner (Photo: Athletics West)



Girls U18 5000m walk

1 Sienna Pitcher	07	NSW	24:51.97
2 Ariana Pashutina	07	VIC	27:44.15
3 Lyla Williams	07	NSW	28:13.13

Girls U17 5000m walk

1 Angelina Legrand	08	SA	24:33.12*
2 Milly Sharpe	08	NQ	25:31.64
3 Jessica Loring	09	NSW	27:27.26
4 Daniella Samuel	08	NSW	27:57.10
.. Kaytee Bogaers	08	WA	DNF

Boys U18 5000m walk

1 John Ronan	07	WA	20:51.01	PZ30
2 Riley Coughlan	07	VIC	21:12.31	PZ30
3 Bailey Housden	07	QLD	21:25.04	
4 Myles Ashby	07	NSW	22:49.20	
5 Joel Byatt	07	NSW	22:59.84	

Boys U17 5000m walk

1 Samuel Lindsay	08	TAS	20:59.18*
2 Kai Dale	08	QLD	27:40.66
.. Alexander Sinnott	08	NSW	DQ TR54.7.5

(* PBs – Samuel 0:37; Angelina 0:03)

Saturday 7 December

Today was the 3000m walkers turn to shine – or perhaps 'glow' would have been a better word given the conditions. A biggish field of 17 girls got proceedings underway with NSW pair **Sophie Polkinghorne** and **Matilda Webb**, representing the class of the field, vying for superiority and neither finding it, such was the nature of their 'arm-wrestle' contest. Polkinghorne, who seldom has to cope with head-to-head duels, tried everything she could to break away and it wasn't until the last 600m that she opened a gap she could maintain, by mere second over the equally tough Webb. This was the most competitive race of the meet, with four PBs resulting, while NSW and Victoria each picked up three medals and **Sarah Holmes** took home a 49 sec PB along with her bronze.

Arguably the best result of the meet was produced by Victoria's **Max Davidson**, who stepped up to another level in the Boys U16 3000m with a huge PB time of **12:53.19**. **Noah Cooke**, whose improvement continues apace, showed he could be the next to make such a step up in class with the major championships just around the corner.

It was depressing to see no entrants for the Boys U15 3000m. Presumably the race had been scheduled. This glaring hole in a key age group needs immediate, cooperative planning to fill it, for the sake of our men's future elite progression.

Girls U16 3000m walk

1 Matilda Webb	09	NSW	14:37.68
2 Maisie Mitchell	09	NSW	15:03.32
3 Sarah Holmes	09	VIC	15:14.52*
4 Olivia Boulton	09	QLD	15:15.21
5 Emma Grocott	09	ACT	16:01.35
6 Katica Borsic	09	WA	17:25.16
7 Chelsey Ireland	09	WA	17:41.49
.. Mietta Morgan	09	VIC	DQ TR54.7.1

Boys U16 3000m walk

1 Max Davidson	09	VIC	12:52.19*
2 Noah Cooke	09	QLD	13:47.49*
3 Jaime Hvalica	10	VIC	15:38.65
4 Eli Melinz	10	QLD	17:27.81*
.. Riley Breckon	10	NSW	DQ TR17.2.4
.. Sagan Jones	11	NSW	DQ TR17.2.4
.. Christopher Nilon	09	NSW	DQ TR17.2.4

Girls U15 3000m walk

1 Sophie Polkinghorne	10	NSW	14:36.59
2 Hannah Matthews	10	VIC	15:11.61*
3 Matilda Read	10	VIC	15:12.23
4 Jillian Ryan	10	ACT	15:28.70
5 Eva Parker	10	TAS	15:52.80*
6 Bethany Moore-Kirkland	10	QLD	15:58.62
7 Lexie Beacroft	10	NSW	16:09.56*
8 Ella Cosgrave	10	QLD	17:36.64
9 Trinity Doulis	10	WA	18:00.84
10 Liliana Martin	10	WA	21:13.79
.. Matilda Rech	10	SA	DQ TR54.7.1

Sunday 8 December

Held in the morning, these races tested the 14 competitors with blazing early heat, and times were generally slower. Victorian **Mya McClure** had complete control of the Girls race with her rivals fighting their own battles with the conditions. Likewise, NSW's **Callum Martin** was clearly superior in the Boys event. Although obviously affected by the heat, Martin nevertheless produced an excellent sub-14:00 time to win. Equally eye-catching was WA's **Liam Domoney**, walking strongly with a powerful technique, who took the silver with the only PB of the race and served notice that he could follow in John Ronan's footsteps in years to come.

Girls U14 3000m walk

1 Mya McClure	11	VIC	15:15.35
2 Ashleigh Mansell	11	NSW	16:17.18
3 Isabella Welch	11	QLD	17:00.72
4 Nikki Hearnden	11	NSW	17:10.86
5 Elspeth Hooper	11	QLD	17:56.34
6 Lani Ellwood	11	NQ	18:01.78
7 Liliana Templer	11	SA	18:18.02

Boys U14 3000m walk

1 Callum Martin	11	NSW	13:49.14
2 Liam Domoney	11	WA	14:10.17*
3 Lewis McLennan	11	VIC	15:31.19
4 Tyler Cousins	11	NSW	16:45.35
5 Sebastian Ryan	11	ACT	18:31.03
6 Riley Hill	11	SA	22:37.66
.. Angus Shuttleworth	11	VIC	DQ TR54.7.1

(*PBs – Sarah 0:49; Max 0:45; Hannah 0:18; Eli 0:16; Liam 0:15; Noah 0:15; Eva 0:07; Lexie 0:01)

AA 35km Championship & 20km Invitational race

Sunday 15 December – Middle Park, Melbourne

Preview

On Sunday, the VRWC's championship lakeside course will set the scene for the country's elite walkers' quest for selection for what will likely be the 35km's last hurrah ... the 2025 WA World T&F Championships in Tokyo. The standard of the fields cannot be disputed: the Men's race can count three WA top 20-listed Australians plus two 2:40+ performers among its 10 starters, while the Women's field includes a 2:47 and a 2:50 walker. Add to this three high-ranked 20km specialists trying their hand at the 35 for the first time, and we have the promise of an exhibition of high-calibre distance walking taking place virtually in our backyard.

Bec Henderson will start favourite in the women's race, having set a national record in Canberra last June and already having an impressive portfolio of results. **Allanah Pitcher**, also with an international *palmares* at the distance, has been fighting her way back from illness and, while she may need more time to reach the 2:50 level she achieved in 2023, she's sure to put it all out there with Tokyo as an incentive. **Olivia Sandery** and **Elizabeth McMillen** are the newbies who might gain more form the race than merely a learning experience. Neither **Hannah Mison** nor the Greek entrant **Christina Papadopoulou** raced over 35km in the past 12 months, but no sub-3 hour finisher can be discounted and either could produce a surprising time on the quick Aughtie Drive loop.

One would be tempted to dismiss the Men's contest as a 'lay down misere' for World No 5 **Rhydian Cowley**, were it not for the sudden appearance of fellow Victorian **Will Thompson**. In October, Thompson stunned everyone with a 2:29:58

clocking in Takahata, Japan, that catapulted him into 13th on the WA list for the year and brought Cowley back within challenging range should anything go wrong on the day – as can always happen in a distance race. The next closest challenger would be **Mitchell Baker**, while the joker in the pack might well be Baker's Canberra stablemate, first-timer **Tim Fraser**. Fraser, like Thompson, has built a strong base of fast 20km results that would serve as an effective springboard for an initial 35km assault.

Women 35km c'ship	Bib	PB	SB	Men 35km c'ship	Bib	PB	SB
Olivia Sandery SA	1	NPT	-	Timothy Fraser ACT	9	NPT	-
Rebecca Henderson VIC	2	2:47:34	2:47:34	Carl Gibbons NSW	10	2:41:32	2:47:33
Hannah Mison NSW	3	2:59:09	-	Dylan Richardson NSW	11	2:38:34	-
Elizabeth McMillen NSW	4	NPT	-	Mitchell Baker ACT	12	2:31:07	2:31:07
Kelly Ruddick VIC	5	3:00:04	-	Corey Dickson VIC	13	2:40:16	2:40:16
Bridget Bell NSW	6	3:17:51	3:17:51	Will Thompson VIC	14	2:29:58	2:29:58
Allanah Pitcher NSW	7	2:50:23	3:11:22	Rhydian Cowley VIC	15	2:26:25	2:26:25
Christina Papadopoulou GRE	8	2:57:29	-				

Following last week's announcement from Monaco, the 20km – up until now the 35km's 'support act' – takes on a hue of poignancy (cynics might call it an 'aura of death row'.) Internationally, however, it still has a year to live, and domestically it's hard to see it vanishing from the program any time soon. Certainly the 10 starters in Sunday's races will go all out to post the best times possible, now that Tokyo will provide the last major iteration of this classic walk distance.

With Jemima Montag absent and the other big guns stepping up to the 35km, **Tayla Billington** looks unbackable here. **Alexandra Griffin**, with two international 10kms to her credit this year, is ready for her first 20km and is set for a big debut by the lake. **Hannah Bolton** is better than the 1:39:09 she set this year and the contest between Bolton and **Alanna Peart** could see a boost in each woman's season best.

Declan Tingay is not yet in a 35km headspace and will appreciate the chance of a solid 20km workout. The race presents a big PB opportunity for **Fraser Saunder**, especially with old junior rival **Marcus Wakim** and NSW's **Jack McGinniskin** also out to cut their times down substantially.

Women 20km Invit.	Bib	PB	SB	Men 20km Invit.	Bib	PB	SB
Tayla Billington QLD	25	1:36:27	1:36:27	Jack McGinniskin NSW	20	1:27:57	1:27:57
Alanna Peart VIC	26	1:39:08	1:39:08	Marcus Wakim VIC	21	1:38:21	-
Hannah Bolton NSW	27	1:39:09	1:39:09	Declan Tingay WA	22	1:18:30	1:19:56
Alexandra Griffin WA	28	NPT	-	Alejandro Stephens VIC	23	1:44:25	1:44:25
Nellie Langford SA	29	NPT	-	Fraser Saunder VIC	24	1:34:19	1:34:19

A.C.T. ACTRFWC & ACTMA results, 5 December- Woden

Results courtesy of **Ann Staunton-Jugovic**:

3,000m Race Walk:

1.	Hana Jugovic	14:57
2.	Ann Staunton-Jugovic	17:28
3.	Jill Pearson	22:30
4.	Lorna England	26:04

3,000m Fitness Walk:

1.	Sue Archer	21:25
2.	Doug Fitzgerald	25:10

1,000m Race Walk:

1.	Tindra Helgstedt	6:10 PB
2.	Phoebe Grocott	6:15 PB
3.	Michelle Bray	6:45
4.	Estrid Helgstedt	7:39

1,000m Fitness Walk:

1.	Jim White	7:51
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WESTERN AUSTRALIA WARWC results, 8 December – Perry Lakes

Terry Jones reports that, while numbers were down with a handful of competitors over east for the schools championships. the weather for the walks was fine – sunny, slight breeze with temperature in the low 20s. Beautiful conditions.

10K	Karyn Tolardo	1:07:01	2K	Hannah Clausnitzer	13:18
5K	Wendy Farrow	35:19	1K	Zoe Fowler	7:30
	Glenys Duncan	49:04			
3K	Dylan Sardelich	16:46			



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

World Athletics revises walking distances... again

(reprinted from [O Marchador](#) – 5 December)

The Council of the International Athletics Federation (known as World Athletics, a name whose translation into Portuguese makes no sense) decided at its meeting on 3 and 4 December in Monaco to change the official distances of race walking events. The 20 km race will now be replaced by race walking events with the distance of a half marathon (21.097 km) and the 35 km race will be replaced by the distance of a marathon (42.195 km). These changes will come into effect in major competitions organised under the auspices of the international federation from 1 January 2026.

In turn, at the Junior World Championships (under-20), the men's and women's 10,000-meter race walks will be replaced by 5,000-meter races. The decision will be implemented from the 2026 edition of the championships in Eugene, United States.

As justification, the international federation body argues that, in this way, it will “help to contextualize the remarkable performances of the walkers, make the march more understandable for fans and encourage mass participation”.

The decision by the International Federation Council follows other changes adopted in the area of race walking, both in terms of distances (with the elimination of the historic 50 km, the introduction of 35 km as the official distance and, later, mixed relays) and in the regulatory field (penalty zones).

After decades (in fact, almost a century) in which walking was based on the culture of the two Olympic distances of 20 and 50 kilometres, now universally considered classic walking distances, in just a few years the official walking distances in major international competitions underwent a tremendous change, which perhaps few can understand. First, the 35 km was introduced as a replacement distance for the 50 km in the world athletics championships, claiming that this distance would be halfway between the two traditional distances. It did not take long to realise what the experts had foreseen: the 35 km was not an alternative for 50 km athletes, but rather an extension for those of the 20 km.

Given the failure of the project, it was immediately decided that the Olympic program would include the mixed marathon walking relay, an invention in which a man and a woman alternately (walk) four courses of around ten kilometers each. Despite being an Olympic event, the relay event does not seem to generate much enthusiasm among walkers, apart from those who aspire to participate internationally.

The arguments used to justify these decisions were similar to those used now: to give more expression to the march; to make it more comprehensible to spectators; to transform it into a spectacle ready for the masses to consume. All of this proved to be unfounded and inconsequential.

Now come the changes announced earlier this week, which naturally raise some questions. Do these changes fit into any development plan for walking? Do they follow a clearly defined strategy? Were the stakeholders (athletes, coaches, judges, managers, event organizers) consulted in the decision-making process? Was there any prior debate? Were those who approved these proposals clear about what was at stake?

To these questions about the past (very recent) we can add some about the future (very or not very near). What will be the next change? And how many months from now will it be adopted? How do the honorable members of the Council of the international federation think that anyone can plan the preparation of athletes in the medium and long term with such decision-making instability?

This problem has, however, one clear aspect: it is becoming increasingly evident that the supposed innovations of world athletics leaders lack credibility, as they are much more concerned with experimenting based on unproven theories than with implementing measures that could actually revitalise a sport (athletics) and a speciality (walking, as it could be any other) that have already seen more serene and stable times. In a world that is increasingly less supportive and more hedonistic, what is needed less is low-brow marketing moves and what is required more is effective contributions to progress. Without disrespecting the culture and memory of sport, built over decades, even centuries, of associationism and not careerism.

By the way, one final question (something of little importance to some, but decisive when it comes to race walking): are the so-called new half-marathon and marathon walking events to be run in a line (as is the case in races) or in a circuit (as is usual in race walking)? It would be unthinkable for the distinguished members of the Federation Council not to have remembered this detail.

MARCIADALMONDO & O MARCHADOR ROUNDUP

- 04/12/2024 - Race Walking: we're changing again.
http://www.marciadalmondo.com/eng/dettagli_news.aspx?id=4552&fbclid=IwY2xjawG-SWVleHRuA2F1bQIxMQABHUrdq9AIHHS1tgQHbG4pgoZzxWhGJW4ArHWdqayIF4KeRJputztK4hKzow_aem_NFI5VZpi7ZwgIpm-B5_n6Q

Nicola Maggio's post following the World Athletics announcement last week of the latest batch of changes to the Senior international championship walks..

The Portuguese race walking blog **O Marchador** posts news reports and results as they come to hand. The page has dozens of links to articles on race walking, featuring both domestic events and those from abroad.

- Monday, December 9, 2024 - João Vieira and Ana Monteiro repeat triumphs in Jamor (2024 Natal Race Walking GP) <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2024/12/joao-vieira-e-ana-monteiro-repetem.html>
- Sunday, December 8, 2024 - José Duván Ccoscco (Peru) wins gold in the 10,000m walk at the South American U18 Championships (San Luis 2024) <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2024/12/jose-duvan-ccoscco-peru-conquista-o.html>
- Sunday, December 8, 2024 - Ecuador stands out in women's racewalking at the U-18 South American Championships (San Luis 2024) <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2024/12/ecuador-em-destaque-na-marcha-atletica.html>
- Saturday, December 7, 2024 - Paulo Murta is the new national coach for walking (and middle-distance running) <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2024/12/paulo-murta-e-o-novo-tecnico-nacional.html>
- Wednesday, December 4, 2024 - Hong Kong National Road Walking Championships (2024) – results <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2024/12/campeonatos-nacionais-de-marcha-em.html>
- Tuesday, December 3, 2024 - Mollet del Vallès hosted the Grand Prix of Walking and the Catalan Masters Championship (results) <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2024/12/mollet-del-valles-foi-palco-de-grande.html>

Note: The O Marchador blog is written in Portuguese. To access an English version, open the page in Google Chrome – if you haven't already – at <https://omarchador.blogspot.com>, then right click on any empty space (not on text) on the page. A window will appear with the option to translate the page. Click on it, and the page should reload in English.

** H&T Online - NOTICE BOARD **

****To all VRWC club members, coaches and others interested in racewalking.**

The link below is a survey on **coaching racewalking**.

The purpose of the questions is to determine how much interest there is in attending the racewalking practical course (*advertised over recent weeks on the H&T Notice Board*), and so will help in determining how often the practical course needed to be conducted.

The survey can be found via the link below or from the VRWC entry portal at Revolutionise Sports and then the Survey tab.

<https://www.revolutionise.com.au/vrwc/surveys/7104>

Thank you,

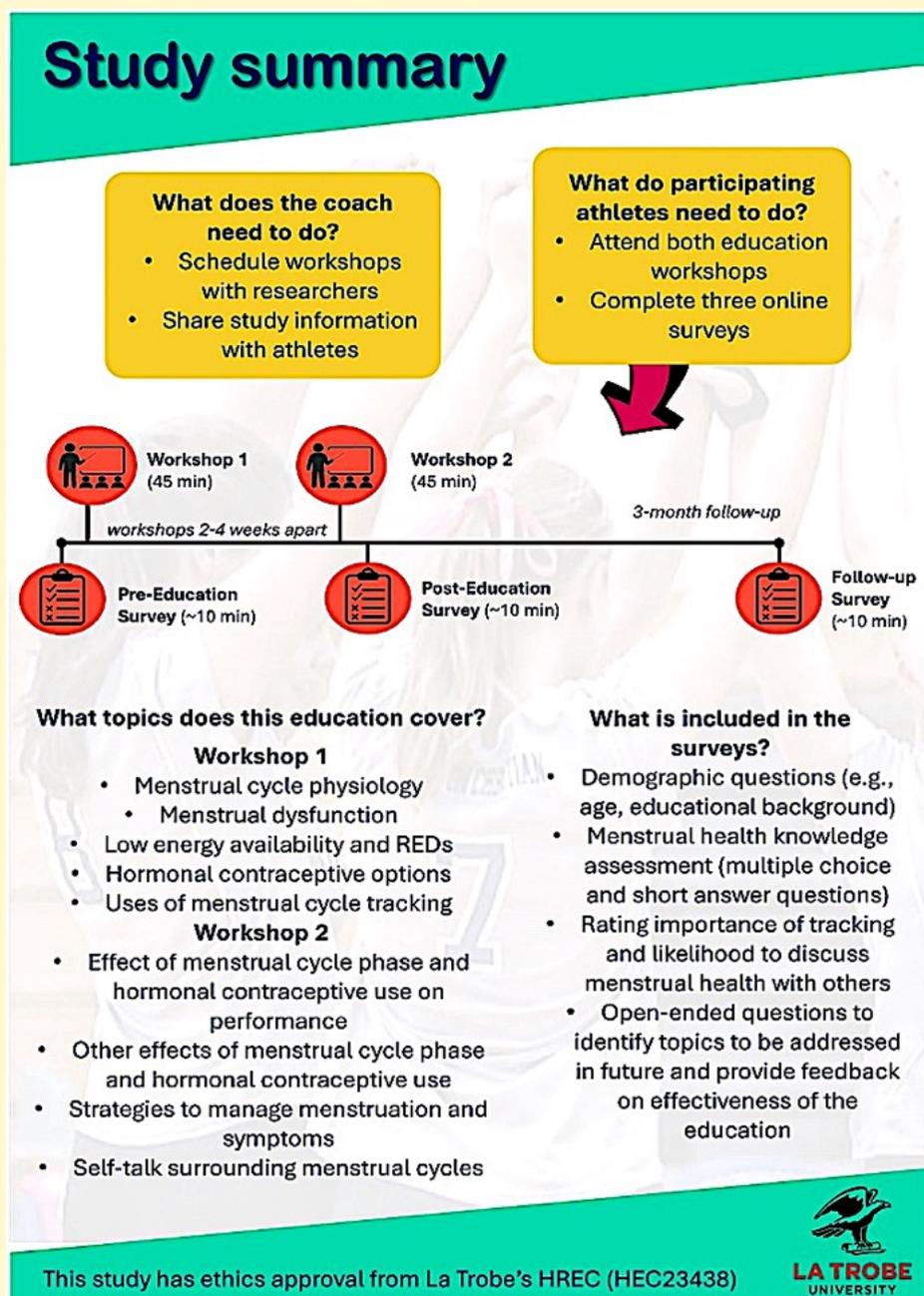
Mark Donahoo, VRWC Club Coach

***Editor's note:** We need your help on this! Coaches form the bedrock of introduction to, and progression in, all sports. Race walking needs more coaches, more coach education and coordination of coaching practice in Victoria if the sport is to thrive. Please do your best to spread the word among your walking and athletics contacts, and encourage them to take the survey and to pass it around.

*RESEARCH STUDY - *Impact of Menstrual Health Education on Female Athletes*

The VRWC has been asked to extend an invitation to interested female **competitors**, aged 15 years and over, and their **coaches/support staff**, to participate in a research study on the subject of menstrual health education and its impact on competitive athletes. The study will be conducted by Mikaeli Carmichael, a PhD candidate at Latrobe University.

A summary chart of the study, explaining what is required of all participants, is included below:



It is expected that the study will take place over six months, up until June 2025. The two face-to-face sessions will be conducted at the VRWC Clubrooms at Middle Park, unless otherwise advised.

Participation is voluntary, although applicants aged under 18 must have permission of a parent or guardian to take part. Information will be gathered, stored and published in such a way as not to reveal the identity of any participant.

All questions and inquiries should be directed to Mikaeli Carmichael at M.Carmichael@latrobe.edu.au.

An application form, containing all relevant information athletes' and coaches' participation, is available on request from Stu Cooper at stuwalks@yahoo.com.au

**This could be a job for you!*

RACE SECRETARY

The role of the Race secretary is to ensure walkers are prepared to race in the events of the day.

In order to this the race secretary will:

1. Have on the check-in table the following:
 - **Race sheets** for the events, **check-in sheets** with names of entries obtained from the Race Director.
 - Information sheet for the event with the event distances, times, age groups stated, colour ribbons to be worn and details of the next race, obtained from the race Director
 - Colour ribbons for walkers to wear, pins
 - Blue folders for the race sheets
 - Spare numbers for those who do not have a race number
 - VRWC numbers for new members or those who need a new number.
2. As walkers arrive,
 - Check their names, bib number and race distance.
 - Make changes to the race sheet if needed
 - Ask the walker to collect the correct colour ribbon
 - Collect race fees if they have not paid
3. If a walker has not entered a race, add their name to the race check in sheet and record any entry fee paid.
4. Readjust the race sheets with any changes or additions from the check in sheet.
5. Record on the check in sheet any additional payments made by the walker or their family, such as uniforms.
6. Have access to the 'SQUARE' terminal to receive payments on the day.
7. 10 minutes before races, have the race sheets and the ribbons for these races, taken to the start line.
8. At the completion of the races, put the numbers, ribbons, folders, pins back in the secretary office.
9. Collect the sheets from the blue folders and pass these onto the race director or person who will type up the results.

**We ask our non-racing (or part-time racing) members to consider trying their hand at this essential race day job. It may sound like a lot but, with practice, much of it will become automatic. Many hands make light work, so if more than one person is interested, the job can be rostered over the season. Mark and Stu will be happy to assist whenever help is needed.*



WHAT'S UP AHEAD?

Victorian & National Key Dates – 2024/2025

Sun 15 Dec 2024
Sun 12 Jan 2025
Sat-Sun 25-26 Jan 2025
Fri-Sun 14-16 Feb 2025
Sun 16 Feb 2025

Australian 35km Race Walk Championships – Middle Park
VRWC Summer program races #3 – Middle Park
Supernova: World Athletics Race Walking Tour (Silver) – Canberra, ACT
AV T&F championships Week 1 (U17-U20, 40+ & 60+) – Lakeside Stadium
Australian 20km Road walk Championships – venue TBC

Fri-Sun 21-23 Feb 2025 AV T&F championships Week 2 (Open, U13-U16) – Lakeside Stadium
Fri-Sun 4-13 Apr 2025 Athletics Australia T&F c'ships – Perth, WA

International Dates

15 Dec 2024	Irish National Senior Outdoor Race Walking Championships – Dublin, IRL
21-23 Mar 2025	WA World Indoor T&F Championships – Nanjing, CHN
4 May 2025	4th Korzeniowski Warsaw Race Walking Cup (WA Gold) – Warsaw, POL
18 May 2025	European Race Walking Team Championships – Podebrady, CZE
16-27 July 2025	World University Games – Bochum, GER
13-21 Sep 2025	20th World Athletics Championships – Tokyo, JPN
30 Oct-15 Nov 2026	Youth Olympic Games – Dakar, SEN

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With your submission, always include the provenance (writer, creator, source publication, date of publication, website link etc). If in doubt about permissibility, check with the owner of the copyright.

***DISCLAIMER:** *The contents of 'Heel & Toe Online', and any opinions expressed therein, are those of the writers, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or of the Victorian Race Walking Club.*

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