

The incident that occurred in the 20k racewalk event in Osaka has its antecedents in the change of rules that we had to make in a very short time, after the Sydney 2000 incident, when the IOC decided to eliminate racewalk from the Olympic program.

To return it to the Olympic program, would be only possible when the IAAF could guarantee that the case that happened in Sydney would never happen again.

To achieve this, the IAAF would have to modify the rules of the race. This rule change would have to be approved at the following World Congress, in Edmonton, 2001, put into practice at the World Championships a day later, and demonstrate its effectiveness at the IAAF World Championships in Paris, 2003.

Only then, the return of the march to the Olympic Games in Athens, 2004, was finally considered.

The new Rules of Walking worked well in Athens, but still had to be adjusted because of what happened at the Racewalk World Cup in Naumburg, Germany, May 1-2, 2004.

The new rule gave power to the Chief Judge to disqualify an athlete, in the last 100 meters of the race, if in his opinion the athlete was **obviously** violating any of the two rules that define racewalking. **The word "obviously" was chosen very carefully.**

About to finish the 10k men, in Naumburg the junior athlete who was clearly in the lead, was disqualified, by the Chief Judge, as allowed by the rules. The athlete immediately left the course with about forty meters to go to the finish line...

But I did not perceive what the infraction had been, so I asked the group of judges to find out from the Chief Judge what the athlete had done wrong to be disqualified. To everyone's surprise, the Chief Judge's response was only to raise his hands to his head and exclaim "... I don't know, I raised the red flag reflexively, without knowing why... I'm so sorry!!!..."

We immediately started the process of adding to the rule that the athlete disqualified in those circumstances would be always allowed to legally finish the race and be allowed to appeal the Judge's decision.

However,... was the Jury of Appeal prepared to attend a protest against the decision of the Chief Racewalking Judge?

At the World Athletics Championships in Osaka, 2007, we realized that this was not the case:

In the last hundred meters of the 20k race, the athlete who finish in second place was disqualified by the Chief Judge of the event. In accordance with the rule, already in force, the athlete, Paquillo Fernández, finished the race, and the Spanish delegation presented a protest.

The president of the Jury of Appeal, Amadeo Francis, sought me out to ask me to accompany him because the Jury of Appeal wanted me to explain the meaning of the rule.

When I arrived at the Jury's room, Arne Ljugqvist, Senior Vice President of the IAAF, took the floor and asked me the following questions, to which I always answered with a categorical **Yes**:

1. You, César, participated in the elaboration of the new rules of Racewalking.
2. You, César, are a member of the TOECS Working Group that selects the Marching judges.
3. Of all the National Race Walking Judges in each Country, the best make up the National Panel
4. From the national panels of every country, the best ones are chosen to integrate the Area Panel.
5. From the area panels, the best ones are chosen to integrate the Panel of International Judges.
6. From the International Panel the best ones are chosen to perform in this World Championship in Osaka.
7. Of the judges selected for the World Championship, the best one is chosen to be the Chief Judge.
8. And now you ask that we, members of the Jury of Appeal, who know nothing about Racewalking, evaluate the decision of that Chief Judge, selected because he is the best of the best?

After my last categorical **Yes**, he asked me to explain why. This was roughly what I said:

The judging Racewalk, unlike any other athletic discipline, is eminently subjective. Infractions are determined considering only "the opinion of the judge"

But the athlete trains to improve his technique, his speed, and his endurance. He does not train to commit infractions. Then the Judge's appreciation and the Athlete's appreciation collide. One of them might be wrong

That is why the opinion of three judges of different origin is needed for a disqualification to proceed.

In the case of the last hundred meters collide, the athlete's appreciation and the Judge's appreciation, both human beings susceptible to having a wrong perception, must be considered of the same value.

Therefore, what I could advise was:

1. Ask the Chief Judge to explain what the athlete did wrong, at what time for how long.
2. Talk to the representative of the Spanish Delegation so that they can explain the reason for their protest.
3. Review all available video recordings, from different angles and at different speeds, to find out who is closer to the truth, the Judge or the Athlete, considering that, according to the rule, the infraction must be obvious, that is, perceptible to the public and, naturally, for the members of the Jury of Appeal.

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As I understand it, the Jury proceeded in this way, and its conclusion was that the athlete's technique had not changed from the first 250 meters on the track, when any infraction was detected, to the last 30 metres where the Judge had perceived the infraction, so the Spanish protest proceeded, and the athlete was not disqualified.