

FAQ

IAAF Race Walking Committee

What is the role of the IAAF Race Walking Committee?

The IAAF Race Walking Committee (RWC) is an advisory body to the IAAF on Race Walking matters. Members of the RWC are elected by the Member Federations. The RWC is advisory in nature, and, as such, does not have decision-making authority within the IAAF structure.

What is the term of the current IAAF Race Walking Committee?

The RWC concludes its 4-year term at the Doha World Championships 2019. There will be no RWC after this term.

What is the impetus behind the need to change?

IOC has made it clear that they want to see change, but the proposal isn't just a reaction to that. The RWC has heard the same from within IAAF on a consistent basis.

Why does the RWC want to propose change?

- Ensure long-term viability of the discipline within the structure of IAAF competitions
- Increase attractiveness of the discipline to all stakeholders
- Improve the pathway from juniors to senior ranks and increase competitor numbers
- Cement race walking as a world-wide discipline.

Didn't the RWC propose the elimination of the 50km and 20km and replacement with a ½ marathon and relay two years ago?

No. The RWC, on extremely short notice, was asked to identify possible options for the future in the event that the current (20km - 50km) programme would be rejected. Initial suggestions were modified significantly prior to a formal presentation to IAAF Council, which made a plea for maintaining the status quo until 2020.

Who has the final say?

The IAAF Council have the final say on any changes to the IAAF programme of events.

Why are we only being consulted now, three weeks before a decision is to be rendered? Will our input have any impact?

The research and investigation has included the stakeholder survey completed last year and consultation with other groups inside and outside of race walking. There have been various documents produced for internal discussion and consultation to narrow down the ideas. Consultation with current athletes and

coaches is critical, since they will be most immediately affected by any changes. However, their input must be balanced with that of all other stakeholders.

It seems the RWC is proposing change for the sake of changing?

This is not the case.

The 2017 meeting and concerns from the IOC certainly made members of the RWC objectively look at what race walking needed to do to ensure its survival. This introspection raised legitimate concerns about growing the discipline in its current form.

The RWC Strategic Plan always outlined that the goal was to have two events for men and two events for women. Gender equality was always part of the plan. Those from outside RW who show an interest have told the RWC that the current format needs to change (along with the rest of Athletics). The proposal is not 'change for change sake'.

What are the issues with the 50km?

- Duration, live TV coverage
- Recently more modest depth, especially when compared to other disciplines in Athletics.
- Fewer countries organising national championships, because fewer athletes are participating at the domestic level in the event.
- Limited attraction for potential athletes, notwithstanding the development of the women's event.

What is the rationale for the 10km?

Various - includes, but not limited to:

- shorter to offer more options for live coverage
- easier (and more logical) transition from U20 (& younger) ... less attrition
- possibility of in-stadium (larger crowds and exposure?)
- enables RW to offer shorter events for U20 & younger (again, less attrition & more athletes attracted to try RW)

What is the rationale for the 30km?

Various - includes, but not limited to:

- maintains endurance nature of the event
- similar time frame as marathon (therefore easier to justify road closures etc - although a minor concern) and other sports' long endurance events have similar time frame (triathlon, 50k xc ski, mountain biking... the only major exception currently being road cycling)
- sufficiently different from proposed 10k to attract different type of athlete, but doubling still feasible.

Why not make it a gradual change?

This is an option that was discussed. But as the introduction of the RWECS insole became more realistic, broad scale change became a possibility. If changes were to be made on a piecemeal basis, the discipline would go through years of uncertainty, which will not likely benefit its development and long-term viability.

Could there be different events on the IAAF programme from those on the Olympic programme?

E.g., could the current 20-50km championship distances be maintained for IAAF events, while having a 30km for the Olympic Games (OG)? Having a different programme for IAAF and OG is likely not workable because IAAF would need to convince IOC of the rationale for having an event on the OG programme but not on the WC programme (for reference, see the demise of the Commonwealth Games 30km).

Federations fund Olympic events and want to see athletes perform in those events (rather than related ones) to determine their level of investment.

The RWC has pushed hard to get four medal events (one more than any previous OG).

If a medal opportunity is lost at the OG, it'll be almost impossible to get it back in the future (especially with new sports / events being added to the OG programme).

However, if there is strong feeling that this could be a possible option, it would be worth documenting the rationale for further consideration.

But will changing the distances help race walking?

Changing distances and improving the product is **only part** of the story.

RW must be more relevant to the non-race walking fans and engage them. We need to market race walking better, to enhance understanding of the discipline and make it more attractive for everyone (including current and potential participants, spectators, media, sponsors, organizers, etc.).

We have opportunity to do that because we are one discipline in which 99.9% of the world's population can participate.

A working group of the RWC has met with IAAF Productions to help ensure improved broadcast of the discipline at major championships. On the recommendation of the RWC, IAAF Productions is also working to create content for production purposes to promote the athletes and the discipline on various media formats.

With many International Federations looking at innovation as the path to growth, including the IOC and IAAF, if there are no changes proposed there is concern that the decision may be taken at a higher level.

Shouldn't the RWC be focussed on improving the presentation of Race Walking as it currently exists, rather than proposing changes in distances? Also see above.

Improving the product is, of course, the objective for both participants and spectators/ media / sponsors. For the above reasons, if the technology is introduced, it makes sense to also change the distances rather than go through a further period of change and upheaval after first introducing the technology. It's critical to note that the proposals are just that, and are not necessarily definitive or binding. Without the successful field testing and acceptance of the RWECS (insole), the options to change distances are limited.

Some members of the RWC have been working diligently within the IAAF structure to achieve this

The current proposals, therefore, are not a fix-all solution, but a step toward increasing viability and encouraging meaningful discussion as to how this might be realised.

Is there evidence to support that innovation will secure a successful future for race walking?

The Olympic sport of Modern Pentathlon modernized in recent times to secure a future in the modern sports world. It changed the length of the competition from 5 days to one, changed the format for winning and combined the running and shooting (now with laser guns) sections. This has helped increase understanding of the competition and improve position in the sports marketplace. Other sports such as cricket, fencing, soccer(football) have all introduced technology to gain long term improvements in their respective sports. Gymnastics is researching (in the lead up to Tokyo 2020) artificial intelligence to aid in their judging. Triathlon, a relative newcomer started with one male and one female competition at the Olympic Games in 2000 and now has added a relay concept.

There is no guarantee that innovations will succeed, but to not recognise the role they might play in ensuring longevity is dangerous.

Who is developing the RWECS insole?

A team from the Research and Technology Centre at the Catalonia Polytechnic University, led by Antonio Amigo, a current race walker and race walking coach in Barcelona.

How can the use of the RWECS be proposed when we haven't seen it in use?

The RWECS is proprietary in nature. In order to protect the considerable investment that has been made by the IAAF, a patent application is being filed. Until this is accepted, testing cannot be made in public. Members of the RWC have witnessed the testing of the RWCES and are satisfied that it is viable.

What is the current situation of the RWECS (insole) project?

The insole training system was successfully tested in Barcelona in June 2017, with a variety of athletes and types of shoes in the presence of coaches Valenti Massana (Olympic Bronze, 50km 1996, World Champion, 20km 1993, now a research physicist) and Montse Pastor coach of Julia Takacs. All were very impressed with the system and the real-time feedback it gave athletes and coaches.

The competition system is to be further tested in the first quarter of 2019 and during 2019 commercial partners will be sought.

Can the system work in any shoes?

It has been tested in every brand shoe, even heavy trail shoes to see if effective. It has also worked under various environmental conditions (including heat, humidity, cold, and excessive moisture).

How much will it cost?

Prices are not confirmed, but the plan is to make it accessible to everyone.

Why aren't the members of the RWC standing up to the demands for change?

The RWC wants to ensure there is a long, prosperous future for race walking from grass roots to elite level and believes change and improved promotion are the best options. The option to do nothing is fraught with more danger. All members want to see race walking succeed and grow as an event and not join others that have been removed from the Olympic (or other major championships) programmes.

What if we keep the status quo?

There may be decisions beyond our control. We are not sure in this instance what may happen and prefer to have a say in the destiny of the discipline.

Will the rules need to change, and, if so, who is responsible for this?

The RWC has set up a Rules Working Group subcommittee, which is working on a revised definition of Race Walking. The Working Group includes leading sport scientists as well as international RW judges, and former international athletes.