

Queensland Race Walking Club Inc.

Building on a fine tradition of race walking, 64 years in the making.



HEEL & TOE

September 10th 2020

'Most of Australia hated him': The judge with the red paddle who broke Australia's heart

Walker Jane Saville experienced the agony of being disqualified just short of an Olympic gold medal at the Sydney Games in 2000.

But how did it feel to be the official who showed her the red card?

Racewalking cops plenty of ribbing but it is unquestionably a brutal sport.

Article by [Iain Payten](#)

September 4, 2020

Lamberto's English was not strong at the best of times but he was particularly quiet on this night. A few of the racewalking judges had gathered after dinner at the Lidcombe apartments where Sydney Olympics athletics officials were camped for the Games. All were weary. The day had been long, hot and controversial, and an outraged Australian media hadn't even hit full stride.

It was September 28, 2000, and earlier in the day Australian walker Jane Saville had been heartbreakingly disqualified just a few hundred metres from a gold medal in the 20km walk. The quiet man was Lamberto Vacchi, a genial Italian racewalking judge.

You've seen Vacchi but probably never heard his name. Vacchi was the Olympic official who, dressed in fawn pants and a white hat, jumped out and showed Saville the red paddle about 200m shy of a gold medal, ripping away her Olympic dream. "Lamberto was distraught," recalls veteran Australian walking judge Bob Cruise. "He was just down that night. As a judge, DQing anyone who is in the lead in the Olympics or a major event, it's pretty tough. "But Jane being an Australian and it being her home crowd and everything ... he felt for her. "There was a newspaper cartoon I came across that night for some reason, showing him with his paddle. I showed him that and thought it might cheer him up. "It didn't improve his mood. Not one bit."



A brutal sport

Racewalking cops plenty of ribbing but it is unquestionably a brutal sport.

There's the physical toll of walking at a pace a vast majority of us couldn't run – think four-minute kilometres – but the kicker is athletes also risk getting turfed out of the race at any minute, if the competitive instinct revs too high and they push *too* hard to win. Racewalking is one of the few Olympic sports where restraint is as important as effort, lest your walk turns into, technically, a run.

And walking judges, well, they don't muck around. They see themselves as the arbiters of fairness and are prepared to disqualify as many people as is required, even on the Olympic stage.

"The overall aim of the judge is to ensure a walker wins a walking race," says Cruise.

So, after a 31-year career as a racewalking judge that included world championships and Olympics, Vacchi was no shrinking violet. The 60-year-old's appointment as chief judge of the racewalking races at the Sydney Olympics in 2000 reflected as much.

But the bank manager from Italy also happened to be widely regarded in the sport as a genuine nice guy.

And when contacted by *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* in his home near San Benedetto Val di Sambro, a small town in the Tuscany region, Vacchi couldn't have been happier to share his memories of Sydney for the first time.

"When I got the call [to be chief judge] it was a great joy," Vacchi said. "I was happy with this assignment and determined to do my job well."

Here is the moment for a crash course in the rules and regulations of racewalking. Put simply, a walker must always have one foot on the ground. Slow-mo replays and still photography can find two feet in the air pretty easily but judges can only determine a "loss of contact" by what they can see with the naked eye.

"If you start doing your maths with all of that, the loss of contact is generally somewhere between 30 milliseconds and 70 or 80 milliseconds," Cruise, who is the president of Race Walking Australia, says.

"Even a good judge can't really see up until about 50 milliseconds, so it's just too quick for the naked eye."

Walkers must also keep their "contact" leg straight.

There are eight judges on course for an Olympic race and competitors operate on a three strikes and you're out basis. If an athlete gets three strikes, the chief judge is notified and as

quickly as possible – it can take a few minutes – they move to a spot where they whip out the red card and disqualify the walker. Red carding is the chief judge's primary role; they don't do any in-race judging.

It's real-time bureaucracy so a well-oiled machine is required or things can go wrong.

And in the first walking race of the Sydney Olympics – the men's 20km – things definitely went wrong. If you thought Saville did it tough in Sydney, spare a thought for Mexican walker Bernardo Segura.

Segura crossed the line first and Mexico was ecstatic. Segura even took a phone call from the Mexican president trackside. The problem was Segura's fast finish had been *too* fast and Cruise had slugged him with a third strike a few hundred metres outside the stadium entrance. Vacchi was too far away on the course disqualifying another walker to stop Segura before he finished.

Eventually, after Vacchi waited politely for the presidential phone call to finish and 15 minutes after he'd crossed the line, Segura was told he'd been disqualified.

The Mexican president complained to IOC boss Juan Antonio Samaranch and an appeal was lodged with CAS. It was dismissed but it was all too messy for the chief judge.

"In light of the experience of the 20km men, for the women's race I changed my position by moving to the end of the tunnel," Vacchi said. "About 120 metres from the finish."

Jane Saville was an Australian champion and a Commonwealth gold medalist but she wasn't among the favourites to win Olympic gold in the 20km in Sydney. She'd been badly hampered by injury in the months leading up to the Games. "She would only have been in the top half-dozen. But she did well on the day and there were about four or five of the top women [that] had been disqualified by the time she got to the lead," Cruise recalls.

Deep into the race, Saville was hanging tough with the leaders but Atlanta Olympics silver medalist Elisabetta Perrone, of Italy, looked the winner.

But tension does strange things. Perrone's restraint slipped and on the ninth 2km loop the Italian picked up three strikes. Whack, whack, whack and out.

Saville took the lead but unhelpfully a confused Perrone continued for another lap before stopping. With China's Wang Liping 30m behind, Saville was now minutes away from living out her dream.

Speaking from her home in Spain, Saville said she could hear the buzzing crowd of 97,000 sitting in the hulking stadium. There were 97,001 people excited about her imminent arrival on the track.

"I thought I am going to be just like Cathy [Freeman], how good is this?" Saville said. "I remember coming down the ramp and hearing people and thinking 'Wow, this is for me'." Vacchi was in his new spot at the foot of the concrete driveway, unintentionally hidden, as Saville charged down. The humble bank manager felt a knot in his stomach. He'd just been informed Saville had picked up a third strike a kilometre back and was out. This one would be brutal. "I remember well when I had to show the red paddle," Vacchi said.

"I was aware of the great disappointment that I would have caused to the Australian public who was waiting for her on the podium. It was a regret that shortly before I had caused the Italian public [with Perrone], who were following the race on television."

Two years before Bradbury had even done his first Bradbury, Liping strolled by and claimed the gold medal. Saville's anguish was raw. With his back to the camera and faceless, Vacchi took the public form of a heartless, even slightly over-eager, judge. Cruelly officious. "But Lamberto was basically the executioner, not the jury," Cruise says. "He didn't do any of the judging."

Saville had no idea who the judge in the white hat was, but even in her sadness, she felt bad for Vacchi. "I always felt sorry for him," Saville recalls. "At the end of the day, most of Australia hated that guy. Everyone still tells me 'I wanted to throw the remote control at him, we were so angry with him' and 'can you believe that guy?'. But he was just the messenger, and people didn't realise that. He didn't make the call. He was just doing his job."

Soon enough the Olympic circus packed up its tents and left Sydney. Vacchi went home to Italy and continued to be a walking judge and instructor until he was 75.

Saville put the disappointment of Sydney behind her and, despite another painful disqualification in the 2001 world championships, won a bronze medal in Athens Olympics in 2004. Given what she'd endured, Saville was genuinely stoked. It took almost a decade for Saville and Vacchi to cross paths a second time. After a world teams event in Russia in 2008, Saville was at the post-race function with some Italian friends when a man wandered over to say hello. "We chatted away and my friend said: 'You don't know who this is do you? He is the guy who disqualified you in Sydney'," Saville said. "We laughed and had a nice time. I knew he was just the messenger that day so obviously I held no ill-will. We actually got a photo with me and Lamberto and his red paddle." She hadn't seen that device of doom in eight years. It was the same paddle Vacchi used in Sydney. Saville revealed she had tried to buy her infamous red paddle in the post-Olympics equipment sell-off in 2000, but organisers came up empty-handed. "I thought if I didn't get the gold medal, I want that red paddle," Saville said. "But I came to realise it was Lamberto's personal one – they take them with them around the world. We ended up getting a photo. It's on a disc in my garage in Sydney, somewhere. It was a fun night."

Saville now splits time between homes in Australia and in Oliva, outside Valencia, with her kids and husband Matt White, a former pro cyclist who is now sporting director of the Mitchelton-Scott professional team.

2020 QUEENSLAND ROAD WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sunday September 6th Murarrie Recreation Reserve

Well done to everyone who competed in the Queensland Athletics State Road Walk Championships at Murarrie on Sunday morning and congratulations to all our new State Champions. Conditions were warm and humid with a stiff headwind on the bottom straight of the course after the turn around. It was very pleasing to see such a good turnout of athletes, officials and family supporters. In any other year the club would have done well with a canteen selling muffins, sausages, cold drinks and coffee. Even the officials were lamenting the absence of the morning tea traditionally supplied by the club. There were a number of good performances during the meet but others found out like our lead article that race walking can be a brutal sport.

Women 20,000 Metre Race Walk Open

1 Gannon, Brenda 46 Qld Masters 2:18:37.00

Men 20,000 Metre Race Walk Open

1 Bennett, Peter 65 Qld Masters 2:08:53.00

Men 65+ 10,000 Metre Race Walk Masters 55+

1 Bennett, Peter 65 Qld Masters 1:03:34.00

Women 10,000 Metre Race Walk Under 20

1 Hannigan, Caitlin 18 UNQ 54:12.00

2 Hamann, Sophie Charlotte 19 Qut Athletics Club 1:04:35.00

3 McRoberts, Jasmine-Rose 18 QA 1:14:13.00

-- Blackwell, Anna 19 Tasmania XDNF

Women 45-49 10,000 Metre Race Walk Masters 35+

1 Gannon, Brenda 46 Qld Masters 1:04:41.00

Women 50-54 10,000 Metre Race Walk Masters 35+

1 Woodward, Erika 54 Qld Masters 1:04:52.00

Women 55-59 10,000 Metre Race Walk Masters 55+

1 Stuckey, Jennifer 55 Qld Masters 1:07:33.00

Women 60+ 10,000 Metre Race Walk Masters 55+

1 Wojcieszuk-Szuba, Jolanta 68 Qld Masters 1:26:23.00
-- McKinven, Noela 78 Qld Masters DQ TR 54.2.1

Boys 10,000 Metre Race Walk Under 18

1 McCure, Lachlan 16 Gold Coast Victory 1:03:06.00
-- Whatman, Riley 17 New South Wales 1:06:31.00

Girls 5,000 Metre Race Walk Under 16

1 Anderson, Jayda 15 Gold Coast Central 24:54.00
2 Heap, Ashanti 14 Gold Coast Central 27:35.00
3 Bergh, Mia 15 Gold Coast Victory 27:49.00
4 Millard, Summer 15 QA 30:52.00
5 Chadwick, Phoebe 14 QA 34:09.00
6 Fisher, Torryn 15 QA 36:36.00
-- Clarke, Anika 15 Redlands Athletics DNF
-- Norton, Amber 14 QA DQ TR 54.2.1

Boys 5,000 Metre Race Walk Under 16

1 McCure, Sam 14 Gold Coast Victory 24:52.00
2 Norton, Kai 15 QA 27:34.00
3 Bannister, Jack 14 USC 31:12.00
-- Bradley, Alex 14 QA DNF

Boys 3,000 Metre Race Walk Under 14

1 Housden, Bailey 13 QA 14:48.00
2 Callaghan, Myles 13 Redlands Athletics 17:36.00
3 Teasel, Bailey 12 Gold Coast Victory 19:47.00

Girls 3,000 Metre Race Walk Under 14

1 Gee, Tamika 13 QA 16:07.00
2 Hingst, Olivia 13 QA 18:20.00
3 Goulding, Lily 13 QA 20:02.00
-- Sharpe, Milly 12 QA DQ TR 54.2.1

Boys 2,000 Metre Race Walk Under 12

1 Gee, Blake 11 QA 12:21.00
2 Bricknell-Hewitt, Korbyn 11 Gold Coast Victory 14:02.00
3 Hoyling, Angus 10 Toowong Harriers 14:50.00
4 Wheeley, Noah 11 Redlands Athletics 14:59.00

Girls 2,000 Metre Race Walk Under 12

1 Clarke, Makenna 11 Redlands Athletics 11:12.00
2 Cosgrave, Ella 10 Gold Coast Victory 12:26.00
3 Fisher, Siaan 10 QA 12:33.00
4 Teasel, Ashlee 10 Gold Coast Victory 14:30.00
5 Rutten, Olivia 10 QA 14:40.00
-- Pickvance, Destinee 11 Gold Coast Victory DQ TR 54.2.1

Boys 1,000 Metre Race Walk Under 10

1 Sibenaler, Hunter 9 Qeii Track Club 5:42.00
2 Anderson, Knox 8 QA J5:42.00

Girls 1,000 Metre Race Walk Under 10

1 McCoombes, Jada 9 QA 5:33.00
2 Gee, Isabella 9 QA 5:52.00
3 Ellwood, Lani 9 QA 6:06.00

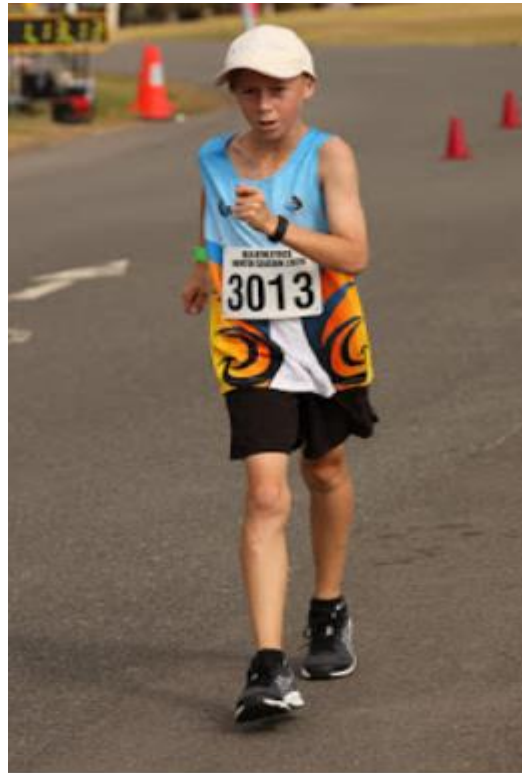
Grit and determination. Yes, it certainly was tough out there on Sunday morning.

All photos courtesy of Julius Bergh









Another One Done

Season Review by Shane Pearson

The 2020 season has come to a close.

A year like no other, but we did get a few races in. The season hasn't been quite as enjoyable as others in the past.

The extra cleaning and sanitizing required of all the equipment before and after every race.

Arriving a lot earlier to set up the Covid safe plan before any athletes could arrive.

Not being allowed to spend time communicating with our members as we would normally. Not getting to know the new members and trying to make them feel welcome. No sausage sizzles or after race discussions. The list goes on. I know I've struggled with that as I like to get to know everybody in the club. At times even made me feel uncomfortable as I felt I couldn't do what I would like to.

Very different to the norm. But hopefully you all agree some races were better than no races. Thank you to the committee for the extra time and effort needed each week to get everything safe and ready. We had to learn quickly and implement new ways of doing things. A lot was done on the fly but we managed to get there. Not everybody seemed happy about how things were done and I did hear some feedback that wasn't always as positive as I would like. But I also got a lot of feedback as well that many people were just happy to be able to have a race and supported what we were trying to achieve. It was a season like no other and no one else has ever had to deal with what we did this year. Hopefully come April when the 2021 season is to start again, we won't be dealing with Covid and the club can get back to normal.

Congratulations to everybody who raced at the QA states championships last Sunday. Some fantastic results by most and a few that may not be as happy. Everybody in general seemed to enjoy themselves. However, from my observations it did seem to be a tough morning racing. Was it conditions or that the athletes didn't have 16 or so races leading up to a championship to be fully prepared and race ready.

The judging seemed more harsh than I ever recall. Over half of all competitors got at least 1 red card. But I do thank QA for being there. I haven't seen that many officials from our governing body on site at a race walking comp since I was still a junior, Dave Smith still representing Australia and the officials wore yellow polo shirts and white safari suit shorts. Either way. Well done to you all for getting out there and racing hard.

With the summer season starting very soon, we now turn our attention to the track races coming up. Let's hope QA provide us with more racing opportunities than they did last year. Which to be honest was pretty disgusting. Would you believe many years back we would have 2 track races at a QA interclub meet every Saturday afternoon? The 1st would start around 3pm and the 2nd around 5pm.

Now we're lucky to get 1 a month.

We have to support the races when they are available. So please do your very best to compete at all the interclub meets when a walk is available.

Finally. Thank you again to you all for your continued support. Have a safe and healthy summer season and I look forward to seeing you all at a track again soon.

Shane

COMING UP – Track Events

September 19th Saturday QMA SAC 8.00am 3,000m Walk
10.00am 1,500m Walk

September Sunday 20th QMA Runaway Bay 8.00am 3,000m Walk

September 23rd QA Mid-Week Meet SAC 6.30pm 3,000m Walk

September 26th Saturday QMA SAC 8.00am 5,000m Walk

October 3rd Saturday QMA SAC 8.00am 3,000m Walk
10.00am 1,500m /Walk

October Sunday 4th QMA Runaway Bay 8.00am 3,000m Walk

October 14th Wednesday QMA SAC 7.00pm 2,000m Walk

October 21st Wednesday QMA SAC 7.00pm 3,000m Walk

October Sunday 25th QMA Runaway Bay 8.00am 3,000m Walk

November Sunday 8th QMA Runaway Bay 8.00am 3,000m Walk

December Sunday 6th QMA Runaway Bay 8.00am 3,000m Walk

December Sunday 20th QMA Runaway Bay 8.00am 3,000m Walk

British race walker Tom Bosworth has ruled out competing this season

British race walker Tom Bosworth has ruled out competing this season after only recently overcoming the long-lasting effects of coronavirus. Bosworth, 30, contracted the virus in March - just weeks after setting new 5,000m and 10,000m British records - but says he didn't feel "back to normal" until early August. He had resumed light training in May but found the effects flared back up. "Even gardening was taking me out of breath," he said "A few weeks earlier, I was in the form of my life, I'd set back-to-back British records and I just couldn't believe something could take me down as quickly as it did."

Rio 2016 Olympian Bosworth said he restarted training six weeks after recovering from the initial illness but found coronavirus' "weird effect" on his body soon returned.

He will now take a short break before starting winter training in preparation for next year's postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics. "I did get back to training in May and went too hard, I really pushed my body, and it all just flared back up like the effects of any virus, neural effects, joint pain, that sort of thing, it all came back. "He added: "We really did take it slowly the first week or so and it felt like it was fine. "But then as the days went on, and I built up training - and we're just talking about training once a day, I usually train twice a day - and by the end of a few weeks of that it was back to square one and literally putting one foot in front of another was so painful."

In July, the UK government said "tens of thousands" of people have long-term symptoms after catching Covid-19. "I had shortness of breath for weeks and weeks after and I'm meant to be one of the fittest people around.

"It shows that it really can take anyone down and why the severity of these messages are as they are."



Dane leading Tom Bosworth heading into that epic last lap at the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games. Gold to Dane, Silver to Tom!

Race Walk Coaching

If you are looking for coach or would like to be part of a training squad there are a number of qualified coaches in the club:

David Smith Walks Level 5

Noela McKinven Walks Level 4

Robyn Wales Walks Level 3

Shane Pearson Walks Level 3

Steve Langley Walks Level 2

To search for a walks coach, see their qualifications, contact details or where & when the coach go to ; <http://icoach.athletics.com.au/at/icoach/Search.aspx>

Racewalking Queensland

(Trading as the *Queensland Race Walking Club Inc.* ABN 59065512712)

Racewalking Queensland Management Committee 2019/20

2020 AGM POSTPONED

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Vice President. P Bennett

Treasurer R Hamann

Committee. C Goulding, I. Jimenez, S. Langley, T. Norton, S McCure, J. Westlin.

Patrons: Patrick & Maxine Sela

Registrar: T Norton

Delegates to QA: S Pearson, P Bennett

Handicapper/Results: N. McKinven

Social Media/Publicity: C Goulding

Trophy Officer: N. McKinven

Newsletter Editor: P. Bennett

Club Captains: Jasmine-Rose McRoberts / Ignacio Jimenez

QRWC Website: www.qrwc.com.au

Queensland Athletics Member Protection Policy

As a member of Athletics Australia, Queensland Athletics, an affiliated club or an individual member everyone is required to comply with the Queensland Athletics Member Protection Policy. We are committed to the health, safety and general well-being of all of our members and will work to ensure that everyone associated with our organisation complies with this

policy. We would encourage all who are involved in athletics to familiarise themselves and comply with this policy.

You can read the full policy here

<http://www.qldathletics.org.au/Portals/50/General/QA%20Member%20Protection%20Policy%20-%20July%202015.pdf>

Contact emails:

qrwc1@optusnet.com.au Membership, coaching or general enquiries about the club
racewalkqld@outlook.com Articles for the newsletter, to send in results, to join newsletter mailing list.

QRWC race entries qrwc1955@icloud.com

About us

Racewalking Queensland conducts its own winter road walk programme from April until September. Thank you to all our contributors of results & reports to this newsletter. We value your input.

For news and information on the Australian Federation of Race Walking (Racewalking Australia) and the member clubs go to www.rwa.org.au

RWA Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/racewalkingaustralia/>