



HEEL AND TOE ONLINE

The official organ of the Victorian Race Walking Club
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SPECIAL ADDENDUM TO ISSUE 27

Hello everyone

I have rarely varied from my weekly newsletter schedule but there have been a couple of occasions when something so significant has come up that it can't wait for a week. This is one of those occasions.

On Wednesday morning, I posted the following to facebook

I recently saw an email, dated 30th March, advising that on April 14th, the IAAF Council will vote on drastic changes to the Olympic and World Championship race walking distances. I got to work and did some undercover work to find out what this was all about. It seems that

- The 50km event will be deleted in future World Cup/World Championship and Olympics

- The 20km event will be discontinued, to be replaced by half marathon distances in all the above competitions

This will take effect after the 2018 World Race Walking Teams Championships in May 2018. So that will be the last international 50km championship.

Apparently no distance changes are being mooted at the junior competition level.

And what is driving this change - apparently the IOC says the 50km is too long! What crap - the 50km in Rio was, to my mind, the most exciting T&F event on the whole program.

Normally the IAAF Council rubber stamp decisions from the Competition/Walking Committee so it seems likely that this will get the tick of approval.

This is being done in complete secrecy - not one word has crept out into the wider walking community - what is going on here. Surely our IAAF Race Walking Committee reps are supposed to be telling us about such things and gauging opinion before moving to such final decision processes.

I am a 50km man. If the 50km disappears, I will walk away from the sport.

This prompted an outpouring of shock, consternation and anger from the wider racewalking community. Within 24 hours, the news had spread across the world and the original facebook post had been reposted by many people, ensuring an even wider audience.

The issue has now become public with the following two press releases, the first of many as word spreads

- <https://www.irishtimes.com/sport/other-sports/50km-race-walk-could-be-removed-from-athletics-programme-1.3038020?mode=amp>
- <http://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1048956/exclusive-racewalkers-petition-iaaf-to-keep-50km-event-on-olympic-programme>

Why do I feel so strongly on this issue.

1. It has been done in complete secrecy. A number of people have contacted their own Federations and the responses from these bodies seem to be a uniform confirmation that they know nothing about it. So just who has been canvassed on this change? Certainly not anyone in the racewalking community and seemingly not the national bodies, by the sound of things. And I am of the opinion that they had no intention of letting us know about it until the recommendation was ratified on 14th April and it was law.
2. There has still been no response from either the IAAF Executive nor the IAAF Race Walking Committee in the past 36 hours since the original post. Their complete lack of response in itself shows the accuracy of this information. If it were not true, they would have refuted it well before now. They hide behind an ongoing shield of silence.
3. We normally rely on the IAAF Race Walking Committee to represent our best interests and to liaise with the racewalking community when major changes are mooted. This was well done in the case of the Pit Lane Changes and is also being done well with regard to the possible implementation of an electronic device to detect loss of contact. Alas, all that good work has been undone with the very disappointing secretive scenario described above.
4. I was one of those walkers who missed out on my Olympic Games in 1976 when the IOC took the 50km out of the Olympics. On that occasion, the IAAF supported the walking community and put on its own (and first) IAAF World Championship, just for 50km and held in Malmo, Sweden. The IAAF then worked with the walking community to ensure that the 50km was added back into the Olympic program in the 1980 Games. Alas, this time it seems to be the IAAF which is driving this second taking down of the 50km event. How times have changed.
5. I regard the 50km as the blue riband racewalking event. It is the ultimate Olympic test. I was trackside in Rio and saw the most wonderful walking race ever with that 50km. It was breathtaking. The changes in the lead, the drama, the walkers collapsing at the finish line, the comradeship of the walkers. All make the 50km a unique event. It must be preserved at all costs.
6. I know what it is like to have your dreams snatched out from you. Think of the many current specialist 50km walkers who will no longer have a 50km international career, post 2018 – Jared Tallent, Matej Toth, Johann Diniz, Evan Dunfee, Jesus Garcia to name a few. These are the big names in racewalking. Indeed, they are the face of racewalking. I suspect that most of them will retire, leading to a diminishing in our sport and leading perhaps to the eventual demise of the sport as an Olympic discipline.

Just so that we know, here are the current IAAF Racewalking Committee members

CHAIRMAN	Maurizio DAMILANO	ITA
MEMBERS	Khaled AMARA	TUN
	Jean-Pierre DAHM	FRA
	Maryanne DANIEL	USA
	Fumio IMAMURA	JPN
	Robert KORZENIOWSKI	POL
	Peter MARLOW	GBR
	Jefferson PEREZ	ECU
	Miguel Angel RODRIGUEZ	MEX
	Luis SALADIE	ESP
	Jane SAVILLE	AUS
	Shande YANG	CHN

This is the committee which has voted to drop the 50km event, without any proper consultation and in complete secrecy. I do know that there was a minority vote against the change but the majority of the committee do seem to have voted YES. Well done to those who had the guts to say NO. Anyone who voted YES does not deserve a place on this committee and I urge them to stand down and allow others, who support our sport rather than the political agenda, to take their place.

I have been following the ongoing response to this issue and I have been just so impressed by the many people who have expressed their support. In particular, our top international walkers have quickly rallied together to express their support for this classic discipline.

I am sure that when the IAAF eventually responds, they will come out with various trite arguments but they will be just that – trite and simplistic and trying to justify their decision post-decision. Where is the analytical analysis? Where are the facts and figures about participation, about the world footprint of this event, etc? For every one of their expected arguments, there is a strong counter argument that can quickly show the flaw in their logic.

Can we do anything to help? Yes, indeed we can.

- **I call upon every reader of this newsletter to IMMEDIATELY email Maurizio Damilano (Chair of the IAAF Walks Committee) to express your absolute horror at what you have heard, and to ask him to clarify what is taking place and ask why this is being done in secret, without any chance for us to give our own input. You also need to ask for his support and the support of his committee to ensure the 50km remains as an Olympic event. And you should finish off your email by specifically asking for a response.**

His email address is m.damilano@mapitalia.it

- Add your support to the online petition at change.org: <https://www.change.org/p/ioc-iaaf-keep-the-50km-race-walk-in-the-olympics>
- Forward this to your friends and invite them to send their own emails and sign the petition. The tide has to be of such a volume that our voices cannot be ignored.

Yours in walking



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