



HEEL AND TOE ONLINE

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PAUL F DEMEESTER TALKS RACEWALKING

Thanks to US Attorney at Law Paul F. DeMeester for another wonderful article - the 41st in a row – and it's as good as ever. You can see links to all Paul's articles at the bottom of webpage <http://www.vrwc.org.au/save-the-50km.shtml>.

THE FAIR ADVANTAGE OF USA SELECTION LAWS

By Paul F. DeMeester

In motor racing, a term is used to describe what every engineer and aerodynamicist is looking for: “the unfair advantage.” Until the governing body rules it unlawful, that is. In our world of athletics, many national governing bodies give their own athletes “an unfair disadvantage.” I want to share with you how the United States, through national legislation, gives its athletes “the fair advantage.”

What is he talking about now? Good question. World Athletics establishes the qualification criteria for participation at the Olympics and World Championships. The entry standard for the 50K Race Walk Event at Rio 2016 was 4:06:00. A member federation is allowed to send three athletes per event, provided they have qualified. Some federations, however, are not satisfied with athletes achieving the standard. Take Athletics New Zealand, for instance. There was no automatic nomination for the 2016 Olympic Games for New Zealand athletes. (See [ANZ 2016 Rio Olympic Games Nomination Criteria](#), clause 7) Olympic selection was discretionary and that discretion was exercised by measuring the athlete against a host of considerations that included a performance standard that for the 50K was 16 minutes tougher (3:50:00) than the entry standard that was set by World Athletics. The same held true for any other events. Meeting the tougher standard was not all. A three-member nomination panel had to select the athlete.

Other member federations employ similar criteria. One can readily imagine that all too often, politics or friendships or not being able to stand each other become selection considerations. I'm not talking about Athletics New Zealand here, about which I know nothing, despite often wearing a black ANZ cap during my workouts. I am using ANZ's selection policies to illustrate the discretionary selection system. Let's call those systems “subjective.” A system that selects an athlete who meets the World Athletics entry standard and finishes in the top-three at a trial meet would be an “objective” selection system. You meet the objective targets (entry standard + top-3 trials finish), and off to the Olympics you go. No discretion involved on the part of any officials. Just results. That would be the way United States of America Track & Field (USATF) nominates its athletes for Olympic Games selection.

There are pros and cons to the different selection systems. Athletes in discretionary systems who are not selected but made the entry standard may wish they were in the U.S. But a U.S. athlete who has the flu or an off-day during the Olympic Trials may end up not making the team. Some member federations account for that by allowing a trials by-pass for athletes who were expected to qualify were it not for some medical excuse. Usain Bolt is a perfect example. In 2016, Bolt did not compete at the Jamaican Olympic Trials. He made the team anyway, courtesy of the medical exemption. Three gold medals followed. Had he been a U.S. athlete, he would have watched the Rio Olympics on television.

The beauty of the U.S. system is that USATF and the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) will fill all the athletics selection slots it has available, provided the athletes made the World Athletics entry standard and finished in the top-three at the Trials. I used to think how nice it was for the federation to do that. Turns out, USATF and USOC have no choice. U.S. federal law requires it. The relevant statute provides that a sports organization under the umbrella of the U.S. Olympic Committee (which includes USATF) is eligible for certification “*only if it ... does not have eligibility criteria related ... to participation in the Olympic Games, ... Pan-American Games ... that are more restrictive than those of the appropriate international sports federation.*” (36 United States Code, § 220522(a)(15).) The underlined language was added during a 1998 revision of the statute which was first enacted in 1978. The revision was part of a 920-page piece of legislation that covered a myriad of unrelated subjects. It has been said that laws are like sausages, it's better not to see them being made. Well, the 1998 revision was one terrific sausage.

Prior to the use of World Rankings, meeting the entry standard and a top-three Trials finish guaranteed selection. Enter the World Rankings. Since not all member federations send all qualified athletes (think New Zealand), World Athletics will go to the next number on the World Rankings in order, and check with the member federation if the invitation to compete will be accepted on behalf of the athlete ranked in that spot, and so on, until all the available spots (e.g., 60) are taken. Regardless of how far from the top U.S.

athletes may rank, once USATF is offered the spot, and the athlete whose number came up was in the top-three at the Trials, that athlete has a sure ticket to the Olympics or the Pan-American Games. This will do wonders for U.S. athletes who in the old days may not have made the entry standard. You may have noticed that the law does not mention the World Championships. History explains why they are missing. When the law was first put on the books back in 1978, there were no World Championships Athletics (except the one-off for the Olympically-deleted 50K Race Walk in 1976). Hence, that competition did not make it into the statute. When it was revised in 1998, no one thought to update the competitions list. Small oversight.

This statute just goes to show that American politicians aren't all that bad. Now and then, they actually pass a good law.

WHAT'S COMING UP

Two additional racewalks have recently been added to the Victorian Calendar. Details are as follows:

Race 1 **Elite 10,000m Track Walk**
Date **Sunday 10th January 2020**
Start Time 9AM
Venue George Knott Athletic Field (Collingwood Track), Heidelberg Rd Clifton Hill VIC

Race 2 **Elite 10,000m Track Walk**
Date **Sunday 31st January 2020**
Start Time 9AM
Venue George Knott Athletic Field (Collingwood Track), Heidelberg Rd Clifton Hill VIC

The two track based 10,000m walks follow on from the December Walks camp at Thredbo Alpine Village in NSW. Most of those walkers will be back in action in Melbourne on Sunday 10th January and again on Sunday 31st January. We don't get many opportunities to see nearly all of our top walkers in action locally, so we are hoping that we have lots of spectators in attendance.

Jan 10 (Sun), 2021	Elite 10,000m Track Walk	George Knott Track, Clifton Hill
Jan 16 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 5 (no walks)	Various venues
Jan 16 (Sat), 2021	Park Runs recommence in Victoria.	
Jan 17 (Sun), 2021	VRWC Road Walks	Middle Park
Jan 22-24, 2121	Victorian Country Track & Field Championships	Ballarat
Jan 31 (Sun), 2021	Elite 10,000m Track Walk	George Knott Track, Clifton Hill

Our VRWC races which were scheduled for Wednesday 27th January at the Mentone track are now likely to be moved, as the track is partially closed due to safety concerns. So stay tuned for the new date and venue.

Alas, it's a very small newsletter this week, with no local races on which to report. I would normally be publishing my Top Ten Male and Top Ten Female Australian Walker lists at this time, but we have had so few races in Australia, and just about NO international races for our local walkers, so I have decided not to produce these lists for 2020.

MARCIADALMONDO AND OMARCHADOR ROUNDUP

Marciadalmondo has 4 press releases this week

- Sun 3 Jan - Koji Hoga Miura (JPN): Reasons why the definition of race walking should be adapted
http://www.marciadalmondo.com/eng/dettagli_news.aspx?id=3951
- Sat 2 Jan - A racewalking homework assignment
http://www.marciadalmondo.com/eng/dettagli_news.aspx?id=3950
- Fri 1 Jan - Tokyo (JPN): Hiroto Jusho and Kumiko Okada win the 69th edition of the New Year Race Walk in Tokyo
http://www.marciadalmondo.com/eng/dettagli_news.aspx?id=3949
- Wed 30 Dec - Tokyo (JPN): Preview of year opening Japanese walks
http://www.marciadalmondo.com/eng/dettagli_news.aspx?id=3948

Omarchador also has 4 press releases.

- Mon 4 Jan - Results of the XXIV Criterium de Navidad in Nerja, Spain
<http://omarchador.blogspot.com/2021/01/xxiv-criterium-de-navidad-em-nerja.html>
- Sat 2 Jan - Hiroto Jusho and Kumiko Okada on the spot at Japan's 69th New Year Festival
<https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2021/01/hirot-jusho-e-kumiko-okada-em.html>
- Thu 31 Dec - A book to celebrate 100 years of the Royal Spanish Athletics Federation (RFEA)

<https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2020/12/nos-100-anos-da-real-federacao.html>

- Wed 30 Dec - José Ortiz (Guatemala) and Alegna González (Mexico) win the Central American 2020 walks in Costa Rica <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2020/12/jose-ortiz-guatemala-e-alegna-gonzalez.html>

OUT AND ABOUT

- Today (Tuesday) Willi Sawall and I attended the funeral of our old walking mate **Peter Fullager**. I am pleased to report that many of his old walking mates were able to attend to pay our final respects to a much loved and much admired compatriot.
- The Guardian Newspaper has published an obituary to mark the death of legendary English walker Paul Nihill. See <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2020/dec/31/paul-nihill-obituary>.
- A nice piece from Ron Wallwork about the walking successes of Wakefield Harriers in the late sixties. Some well known names here. <https://lancswalkingclub.com/2021/01/04/wakefields-purple-patch-1967-1969/>.

The Olympic Games has a cloud over it, to say the least. We can but keep our fingers crossed and hope for the best.

- A spike in coronavirus cases in Tokyo has raised fresh fears about the Olympic,s as Japan's capital reported a daily record of 1,337 new Covid-19 infections last Thursday and the nationwide figure was 4,515. And the numbers show no signs of abating any time soon. See <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/othersports/article-9102885/New-fears-Tokyo-Olympic-games-Japans-capital-reported-daily-record-1-337-new-infections.html>.
- Tokyo and three neighbouring prefectures have asked the Japanese Government to declare a state of emergency as coronavirus cases escalate in the Olympic host city. See <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1102571/tokyo-gov-request-state-of-emergency>.
- Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is trying to exude confidence in the face of the pandemic and has again promised the Olympics will be "safe and secure" as he considers whether to initiate the state of emergency. See <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1102536/japan>.
- Host towns for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics have expressed concern over the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, with communities across the country that had been expecting to welcome foreign teams for training camps ahead of the Games left in limbo. See <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1102452/tokyo-2020-olympics-host-towns-covid-19>.

DATES...DATES...DATES

As usual, I finish with a list of upcoming events on the local, national and international fronts. Let me know of any errors/omissions. It continues to change quickly as a result of COVID-19 issues.

For VRWC race details, see <http://www.vrwc.org.au/vrwcs21.shtml>

For Ballarat Race Walkers Club race details, see <https://www.ballaratracewalkers.com/wp/>

For the Athletics Australia summer fixture, see <https://cdn.revolutionise.com.au/cups/aa/files/aexjryarznk08gxh.pdf>

Victorian Key Dates – Summer 2020/2021

Jan 10 (Sun), 2021	Elite 10,000m Track Walk	Clifton Hill
Jan 16 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 5 (no walks)	Various venues
Jan 17 (Sun), 2021	VRWC Road Walks	Middle Park
Jan 22-24, 2121	Victorian Country Track & Field Championships	Ballarat
Jan 27 (Wed), 2021	VRWC Track Races	Mentone
Jan 31 (Sun), 2021	Elite 10,000m Track Walk	Clifton Hill
Feb 6 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 6 (no walks)	Various venues
Feb 10 (Wed),2021	AV 5000m Teams Race Championship	Mentone
Feb 13 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 7 (events TBA)	Various venues
Feb 14 (Sun), 2021	VRWC Road Walks	Middle Park
Feb 14 (Sun), 2021	Australian 20km Roadwalk Championships	Adelaide, SA
	Entries close on Monday 1 st February - https://www.athletics.com.au/events/83392/	
Feb 19-21, 2021	Victorian T&F Championships (Weekend 1)	Lakeside Stadium
Feb 26-28, 2021	Victorian T&F Championships (Weekend 2)	Lakeside Stadium
Mar 5-8, 2021	Australian Masters Championships	Canberra, ACT
Mar 6 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 8 (events TBA)	Various venues
Mar 13 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 9 (events TBA)	Various venues
Mar 20 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 10 (events TBA)	Various venues
Mar 21 (Sun), 2021	VMA 5000m Walk Championship	Mentone
Mar 27 (Sat), 2021	Australian 50km Championship (Men)	VIC

Mar 27 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Playoffs	Lakeside Stadium
Apr 12-21, 2021	Australian Athletics Championships	TBA
Apr 23-24, 2021	Australian Little Athletics Championships	VIC
Apr 24-25, 2021	Victorian Masters T&F Championships	Doncaster

2021 World Athletics Race Walk Challenge

Mar 27 (Sat), 2021	RW Challenge Meet, Taicang, CHN)
Apr 10 (Sat), 2021	Rio Grande International Grand Prix, Rio Maior, POR
May 29 (Sat), 2021	Gran Premio Cantones de La Coruña, La Coruna, ESP
Aug, 2021	Olympic Games, Sapporo, JAP
Oct 9 (Sat), 2021	RW Challenge Meet, Mexico City, MEX
Oct 16 (Sat), 2021	Invitational Race Walking Meeting, Coatzacoalcos, MEX

Other International Dates

May 16, 2021	European Race Walking Team Championships, Podebrady, CZE
July 23 – Aug 8, 2021	32nd Olympic Games, Tokyo and Sapporo
July, 2021	23rd World Masters T&F Championships , Tampere, Finland (NOW POSTPONED TILL 2022)
Aug 8-19, 2021	World University Summer Games , Chengdu, China
Aug 20-21, 2021	18th World Athletics U20 T&F Championships , Nairobi, Kenya (POSTPONED FROM 2020)

Jan 2022	Oceania Masters Championships , Norfolk Island (POSTPONED FROM JANUARY 2020)
TBA, 2022	9th World Masters Indoor T&F Championships , Edmonton, Canada
Apr 23-24, 2022	29th World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships , Minsk, Belarus
July 15-24, 2022	18th World Athletics Championships , Eugene, USA
July 27 - Aug 7, 2022	XXII Commonwealth Games , Birmingham, GBR
Aug 11-21, 2022	European Athletics Championships , Munich, GER
TBA, 2022	19th World Athletics U20 T&F Championships , Cali, Colombia

TBA, 2023	24th World Masters T&F Championships , Gothenburg Sweden
Aug 2023 (TBC)	19th World Athletics Championships , Budapest, Hungary

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Copies of recent newsletters are kept on the VRWC website (<http://www.vrwc.org.au>)