

WORLD ATHLETICS RACE WALKING TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS

The World Athletics Team Race Walking Championships are a walking event organized by World Athletics. They have been held since 1961 and are generally held every two years.

For the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, Switzerland, along with other nations, decided to boycott the Games to protest Russia's repression of the Hungarian riot.

After the protests, the Swiss National Olympic Committee voted in favor of participation, but too late for many athletes to travel. The only Swiss present at the Olympics was international judge Armando Libotte, a former Swiss 50 km race walking champion and journalist and editor of the "Rivista di Lugano." Libotte, a member of the International Athletics Federation's Race Walking Commission, proposed to his colleagues on the committee that they create an international competition for national teams. The idea was accepted by the commission, and in homage to its creator, the competition was named the "Trofeo Lugano." The first edition took place in 1961 in Lugano (20 km) and Rancate (50 km). The rules provided for a series of qualifications to be held between European teams. The top-placed team in each group could participate in the final. The final was later expanded to include the top two teams from the qualifications. The final team classification of the Trophy combined the points from the 20 km and 50 km, and the first edition was won by Great Britain, thanks to the better placing in the 50 km, compared to Sweden, who had obtained the same points. The rules then stipulated that the trophy would be awarded definitively to the nation that had placed first in three editions. The first trophy was won by East Germany; the second and third by the Soviet Union. The combined classification (20 + 50) remained until the 1999 edition in Mezidon-Canon, where a separate team classification was introduced for each race.

Qualifying races for European teams were held until 1985. Teams from other continents were admitted, in ever-increasing numbers, starting with the 1967 edition in Bad Sarrow. The first two non-European nations to participate in the final were the United States and South Africa. Starting with the 1977 edition in Milton Keynes, the competition was

called the "IAAF Race Walking World Cup." In 1987, for the New York edition, participation was expanded to all IAAF member nations.
The Trophy was initially reserved for men's teams. In 1979, the women's 5 km race was officially introduced in Eschborn, and the trophy took the name "Eschborn Cup."

Starting with the 1985 edition in Bergen, the race was extended to 10 km, and starting with the Mezidon-Canon edition, it was extended to 20 km. The only edition in which women's qualifications for the European teams were also included was the 1985 edition held on the Isle of Man.

In 2004, the IAAF Race Walking World Cup in Naumburg added races for the Junior category (now under 20), both men and women, over the 10 km distance.

In 2016, for the 27th edition held in Rome, the competition was renamed the "IAAF World Race Walking Team Championships," and from 2022 in Muscat, it became the "World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships."

The 2016 "IAAF World Race Walking Team Championships" was scheduled to be held in Cheboksary, Russia. However, the suspension of the Russian Athletics Federation by the IAAF prevented the Soviet nation from hosting international competitions. The event was therefore moved to Rome.
The 2020 edition, scheduled to be held in Minsk, Belarus, was not held due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The current best performances in these 29 editions belong to: Paquillo Fernández in the men's 20 km, who won in Cheboksary in 2008 with a time of 1:18:15.
In the 35 km in Muscat (2022), in the only competition held so far, Perseus Kalstrom finished with a time of 2:36:14. The fastest 50 km race was in Cheboksary in 2008, where Russian Denis Nizhegorodov finished with a time of 3:34:14.
In the women's field, the best performances are by Marion Fawkes in the 5 km in Eschborn in 1979; in the 10 km, Irina Stankina ran in Podebrady (1997) with a time of 41:52; and in the 20 km the best performance was achieved in Cheboksary (2008) by Olga Kaniskina, who completed the race in a time of 1:25:42. The 35 km record (also for women, only one edition) belongs to Glenda Morejon with a time of 2:48:33, set in Muscat in 2022, while in the 50 km race, the fastest was Liang Rui, who won the race in Taicang (2018) in 4:04:36.
In the Junior races (under 20), the records are: for the men, Gao Wenkui (China), achieved in Taicang in the 2014 edition with a time of 39:40, and for the women, Tatyana Kalmikova, who completed her effort in Cheboksary in 2008 with a time of 42:44. As you can see, the fastest overall race was held in Cheboksary in 2008.

Over these 30 editions, the men with the most medals were: Jefferson Pérez (Ecu), first in 1997, 2002, and 2004, and second in the 20 km race in 2006; Christoph Höhne (DDR), who won the 50km race in three consecutive editions (1965, 1967, and 1970) and also won a bronze medal in 1973; Raul González (Mexico), three-time winner of the 50 km race in 1977, 1981, and 1983; and Carlos Mercenario (Mexico), winner of the 20 km race in 1987 and twice of the 50km race in 1991 and 1993.

In the women's race, the most successful athlete is Russian Yelena Nikolayeva, with one victory (2004 - 20 km), one second place (1995 - 10 km), and one third place (1993 - 10 km); only María Guadalupe González has managed to win two consecutive editions (2016 and 2018). Numerous other athletes have won two medals: Russians Olga Krishtop (gold in 1997 and bronze in 1985); Irina Strakhova, who won in 1991 and came second in 1987; Olimpiada Ivanova, who came second twice in 1997 and 2002; Natalya Fedoskina, silver in 1999 and bronze in 2002; Portugal's Vera Santos won a silver in 2010 and a bronze in 2008; Kimberly García-Leon (Peru) won in 2024 and finished third in 2022; Chinese athletes: Ma Zhenxia, gold in 2022 and silver in 2024; Qieyang Shejie, two-time silver medalist in 2016 and 2018; and Yang Jiayu, one silver in 2022 and a bronze in 2022.

In the men's event, the nation with the most individual medals is Mexico with 12 gold, 7 silver, and 5 bronze, followed by the GDR with 9 gold, 6 silver, and 8 bronze. China is third with 5 gold, 7 silver, and 1 bronze. In the women's event, China leads the way (7-9-5), followed by Russia (5-6-1), and the USSR (2-3-6).
In the men's team medal table, Russia leads (8-1-2), followed by China (6-3-7); Italy is third (5-5-8); in the women's event, China leads (8-5-2), followed by Russia (5-2-2), and the USSR is third (4-2-0).

In the Junior (U20) competitions, noteworthy are the two consecutive victories (2010-2012) by Eder Arévalo (Ecuador) in the men's category and Vera Sokolova (2004-2006) in the women's category.
The only athlete to win in both the junior and senior categories was Ma Zhenxia.
The junior medal table by nation in the individual men's category shows China in first place, followed by Russia. In the women's category, China is first and Russia second.
The podium for the team classification mirrors the individual one, with China and Russia in both categories first and second.

Unfortunately, in the 68 races held, several athletes were disqualified for doping. The long list includes mostly Russians, but also Ukrainians, Turkish, and some from other nations. These athletes were disqualified either for violating IAAF rule 32.2(a): the presence of a prohibited substance or its metabolites, or due to anomalies in the biological passport established by the WADA code.
China's Gu Yan, who finished fourth and Ukraine's Olga Leonenko who finished seventh were the first athletes to be disqualified for doping in the 1995 edition in Beijing. China's Gu Yan received another posthumous disqualification in Poděbrady in 1997, where she had finished third. Spaniard Daniel Plaza was also disqualified in that edition, and he was also disqualified in the 1999 edition in Mezidon.
In 2008, Russian Vladimir Kanaykin initially finished second and won the silver medal in 3:36:55 but was disqualified for doping violations. Viktor Burayev was also disqualified in the 20 km race.
In 2010, in the 20 km race, fourth-place Erik Tysse (Nor) and fourteenth-place Petr Trofimov (Rus) were excluded from the final results.
The edition most affected by the doping problem was the one held in Saransk in 2012, where nine male and five female athletes were disqualified following doping violations.

In the men's 20 km race, the following athletes were disqualified: Krivov (Rus) who finished second; Kanaykin (Russia), who placed third; Dmytrenko (Ukr), who finished fourth; Morozov (Rus), who finished fifth; Borchin (Rus), who placed ninth; and Turkey's Çelik (Turkey), who withdrew from the competition.
In the 50 km race, winner Sergey Kirdyapkin, silver medalist Igor Erokhin, and fourth-place finisher Sergey Bakulin, all Russians, had their times and placings annulled due to doping violations.
In the women's 20 km race, Russians Yelena Lamashanova, who finished first, and Igor Erokhin, who finished fourth, were disqualified. Olga Kaniskina finished second in the race, and Anisya Kyrdiapkina finished fifth. She was joined by Ukrainian Olena Shumkina, who finished twelfth, and Turkish athlete Handan Koçyiğit Cavdar.
In 2014, in Taicang, China, more Russian athletes were disqualified for doping. First-place finisher Mikhail Ryzhov, fourth-place finisher Yuriy Andronov, and fifth-place finisher Alexey Bartsaykin all competed in the 50 km race. In addition, Ukrainian Olena Shumkina, who had finished forty-second, was disqualified again in the women's 20 km race. The last two athletes disqualified for doping, both of whom finished first in their races in Rome 2016, were Alex Schwazer (Italy) in the 50 km race and Liu Hong (China) in the women's 20 km race.

The most-attended men's athlete is García Jesús Ángel Garcia Bragado (Esp), who participated in 13 editions from 1993 to 2018, winning the 50 km race in 1997 and finishing second twice in 1993 and 1995.
Kristina Saltanovic holds the most appearances in the women's race with 12 appearances. The Lithuanian competed continuously from 1995 to 2018, achieving her best finish of twelfth place in the 2010 Chihuahua edition.
The edition with the highest number of disqualifications for incorrect walking was Naumburg in 2004, with 38 athletes DQ'ed across the various categories.
The edition with the highest number of appearances was Saransk 2012, with 449 participants representing 61 nations.

