

ANTONELLA PALMISANO			
1	Olympic Games	2021	Tokyo
2	World Championships	2025	Tokyo
3	World Championships	2017	London

Question:

1) Race walking is undergoing a transformation compared to traditional race distances. What do you think of this standardization of running and walking distances with the introduction of the marathon and half-marathon race walking?

Race walking is a discipline with a very specific history, culture, and technical identity, and I believe it's crucial not to lose them. Conforming to running distances may make sense from a media or organizational standpoint, but it shouldn't become a way to distort what race walking represents. Our specialty has never needed to "copy" other disciplines to be valid or fascinating. I think the real challenge isn't to change distances to make it attractive, but to better convey what we already do. Race walking is simple in its gestures, universal, and understandable by everyone: everyone knows how to walk. It's precisely this simplicity that makes it unique and powerful. Introducing new distances shouldn't make us forget that race walking is a race walking, with its own rules, its own technique, and its own identity, which must be preserved and valued.

2) You're currently experiencing the current era of world walking: what would you like to convey about this world to young people and enthusiasts?

I'd like to convey to young people and enthusiasts the idea that walking isn't just about performance, but also about life itself. It's a discipline that teaches patience, respect for the rules, attention to detail, and great body awareness. Today, world walking is highly competitive, with athletes of the highest technical and human level, and it's a world that deserves to be better understood. I'd like to make it clear that walking is a sport accessible to everyone: you don't need sophisticated facilities, you don't need special equipment, all you need is a road and the desire to get going. And that's precisely why sport has a duty to inspire children and adults to practice, to make them feel part of something. Walking can unite, because it starts with a gesture that unites everyone, and this is a value.

3) Race walking is performance, but also, and above all, technical identity. What do you think should be done to improve understanding and identification of the discipline, and to ensure fairness of judgment?

I firmly believe that technology can be a great ally, not to distort race walking, but to protect and better explain it. Those who watch a race on television often lack the tools to understand what's really happening: a few simple graphs, hourly speeds, 5km progressions in long distances, and clear indications of who's leading and how the race is evolving, a bit like cycling, would be enough. This would help spectators understand the complexity and technical beauty of our discipline. But technology can and must also help in terms of fairness of judgment. The technical gesture of race walking has inevitably changed over time: the pursuit of efficiency, speed, and records has led to an evolution of the movement compared to traditional race walking. However, this has made judging increasingly complex and, at times, subject to different interpretations, even challenging the judges. The introduction of support systems such as insoles could represent a concrete aid to external judging, not to replace the human eye, but to complement it and make it more objective and consistent. It would protect the athletes, the judges, and the credibility of the discipline itself. Race walking must remain a race walking, with its own rules and identity, but precisely for this reason it needs modern tools that guarantee fairness, clarity, and respect, both on and off the competition field.

4) Do you think that current race courses, mostly reduced to 1,000-meter laps, enhance the spectacle and understanding of the race, or would slightly longer courses help spectators better understand the event?

I believe that the one-kilometer circuit, as currently structured, is an effective and realistic solution. In a context where unfortunately walking doesn't always enjoy the visibility it deserves, longer routes would only risk dispersing spectators and making the race even less enjoyable. A compact circuit allows spectators to better follow the event and organizers to manage the event more easily, without the need to close long stretches of road. As athletes, we have always demonstrated our ability to adapt, and it's a quality that's part of our DNA. If adequate technological systems, like those mentioned above, were introduced, even those following the race at home could have a clear picture of the competition's progress, with information on the

frontrunners, without the confusion of overtaking. In this way, the 1,000-meter circuit would become not a limitation, but a strength, both from a sporting and organizational standpoint.

5) You are a symbol of the history of the discipline, a legend of race walking. How would you describe your love and passion for this discipline?

My love for walking is born and grows every day from constant research. For me, it has never been just about performance or results, but a journey of effort, rigorous training, and, above all, a constant search for the perfect, harmonious technique. I've always been fascinated by the idea of combining elegance with effort, the beauty of the gesture with the suffering that every athlete knows well. I've never taken anything for granted, because walking demands attention, respect, and dedication every day. Over time, I've realized that this discipline hasn't just given me athletic results, but has also shaped me as a person. Walking shaped my identity, and as a young girl, at a delicate moment in my development, it represented a different path, capable of saving my childhood and providing me with solid reference points. The kilometers and hours spent, often alone, on the road, forged my character, teaching me patience, resilience, and self-confidence. Today, a fundamental part of my passion is also being able to inspire new generations. I hope my example can be of help to those who need direction, opportunity, a path forward. If walking could do that for me, I believe it can do the same for many others, and that's one of the greatest gifts this discipline has ever given me