

JANE SAVILLE			
3	Olympic Games	2004	Athens
1	Commonwealth Games	1998	Kuala Lampur
1	Commonwealth Games	2002	Manchester

Question:

1) Race walking is undergoing a transformation compared to traditional running distances. What is your opinion on this standardization of running and walking distances with the introduction of the marathon and half marathon race walking distance?

I like that there is a reference point where the general public are able to understand how fast the athletes are race walking. Obviously, it's a shame that we have lost the 50km from the programme, especially as it was the longest event, but I don't think it was viable in the long term. Hopefully the new distances will increase interest in the discipline.

2) You have memories of a specific period in world race walking, what would you like to convey about that world to young people and current enthusiasts?

Obviously growing up in Australia during the reign of Kerry Saxby-Junna was inspirational. She was one of the pioneers in women's race walking, breaking more than 20 world records and world bests. There were track meets in Australia where her race was the main draw card and they filled stands to watch her break world records! I was only a teenager at the time and participated in several races (many times almost a lap behind!) when she broke many of her world records. I was incredibly fortunate to participate in those races and to have her as a role model growing up and then later compete next to her at the Olympic Games
Also, my first World Cup of Race Walking (now World Race Walking Team Championships) was in 1993 Monterrey, Mexico. With Mexico having such a huge tradition in race walking, the crowd was enormous and very vocal and watching the men's 50km over 100 athletes competing and Carlos Mercenario winning is one of my fondest memories of a race as a spectator. During my career I raced in Mexico many times after 1993 and always loved the respect and knowledge they had for race walking. The crowds were always big, and they understood the athletes and the discipline. I remember training on the promenade in San Diego in the early 2000's before a race in Tijuana and someone yelled out to our group go Raul Gonzalez! I was blown away that someone knew who the Olympic Champion was from 20 years before in Los Angeles!

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 support technology to remove the subjective nature of judging, especially regarding loss of contact. I supported it during my time on the IAAF Race Walking Committee and now as part of the Working Group for the Race Walking Electronic Control System (RWECS) I believe this is the future for our discipline to gain credibility and ensure fair competition. It's frustrating watching people repeatedly insult our event because it is judged by the human eye and we all know it's very difficult to judge when athletes are race walking so fast, with over 200 steps a minute.

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

I would like to see longer courses, and now with the half and full marathon courses and if the technology to judge loss of contact is introduced and maybe some other rule changes it could become a reality. The 1km or 2km course is hard to follow for spectators during longer events. Even a 5km loop would be better, especially around the city center.

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?

I started athletics when I was 4 years of age and won my first state medal at 11 years, so nearly 50 years in the sport, first as an athlete, then judge and now I coach at the grass roots in my club. I love the sport of athletics but obviously race walking as my 1st passion. I enjoy talking to people and teaching people about the discipline to enhance their knowledge and understanding, especially when they talk about my disqualification in the Sydney 2000 Olympics. I always use it as an opportunity to teach people about our beautiful discipline. And remind them that I won a silver medal at World Juniors in 1992 because 2 girls in front of me were disqualified, so it goes both ways.

6) Do you think the current judging system is understandable and reflects the values of the specialty?

I think the current judging system is antiquated and we need to introduce technology to make it fair for everyone. As a former judge I can say it's a tough job, especially when you have large packs of fast walkers and you can't see all of them. The public want it to be fair and so do the athletes, and the current system doesn't give the discipline the positive attention it deserves.