

LIU HONG			
1	Olympic Games	2016	Rio de Janeiro
1	World Championships	2011	Daegu
1	World Championships	2013	Moscow
1	World Championships	2015	Bejijng
1	World Championships	2019	Doha
2	World Championships	2009	Berlin
2	Olympic Games	2012	London
3	Olympic Games	2021	Tokyo

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 distances?

World Athletics aims to make race walking more understandable by aligning its distances with the marathon, but the actual effect may be the opposite. When a

weaker discipline is placed within the framework of a stronger one, it does not gain more attention; instead, it highlights comparisons of distance and time, making race walking appear as a “slow version of the marathon.” This deepens public confusion about the discipline’s purpose and further weakens its technical identity and independent value.

2) Do 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?

My career was long, and many people wonder where my endless motivation came from. I didn’t have the perfect natural physique, and injuries from my youth made it difficult to display flawless technique. This pushed me to constantly explore my potential and search for the best balance. Because I always saw my own shortcomings, I kept striving to improve. Technique was the core of everything each time I stepped onto the course, I carried in my mind the image of perfect race-walking form.

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?

This is a difficult question. Race walking may require structural changes far beyond adjusting distances. One possibility is to adopt a model like the individual time trial in road cycling, where athletes compete mostly independently and results are determined purely by time. In such a format, electronic judging becomes feasible, traditional tactical interactions disappear, and the viewing experience changes completely.

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?

A 1,000-meter course makes it easier for spectators to follow the event and provides more opportunities to cheer. The downside is that in long races with large differences in ability, it becomes harder to distinguish the leaders from those being lapped.

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?

As a Chinese athlete, striving to be world-leading was part of my national mission. I entered the system at a young age and received far more support than many athletes around the world. Yet for many years, I couldn’t feel the joy or beauty of race walking—winning felt like duty. Only after becoming a mother and choosing to return did I understand the sport’s meaning on the world stage and feel the passion of competing for myself. Race walking changed my destiny and shaped my life, and I hope to contribute to its future.

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

The current system is not ideal. The race is strongly influenced by the personal opinions of 6–9 judges. It requires years of practice to maintain consistent judging, but many regions lack such conditions, resulting in inconsistent standards. Although the rules appear black-and-white, a large grey area exists. Since the system only punishes bad technique and never rewards good technique, athletes benefit most from staying just below the penalty threshold rather than pursuing the best technique. This contradicts the core values of race walking.