

LAVic RACE WALKING

Race Walk Judging & Coaching Handbook



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Prepared by the LAVic Race Walking Committee.

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LAVic RACE WALKING

A TRAINING GUIDE FOR WALK JUDGES

Race Walk Judging is essential to Race Walking. That is why we constantly need people to train, so that Walks can continue to be conducted efficiently at our Little Athletics Centres.

The LAVic Competition Rules must be adhered to for all Championships, including Region Track & Field. There may be procedures in place at Centres governing the conduct of Race Walking events, but the principal definition describing the method of Race Walking always applies.

LAVic Graded Race Walk Judges have to attend seminars, pass exams, and prove their practical ability on a regular basis to retain their names on the LAVic Walk Judge Register.

Most importantly, Race Walk Judges must develop the ability to decide whether an athlete is Race Walking correctly.

The International Association of Athletics Federations has given us an Official Definition of Race Walking. This Definition seeks to make Race Walking and Judging uniform throughout the World. It is the same Definition everywhere – at all levels up to and including World Championships.

It is essential that a Judge knows and understands the definition of Race Walking, as it is the only basis for decisions when judging. Please read this Guide carefully. It has been developed to assist you with your understanding of the Race Walking definition and your development as a Race Walk Judge.

OFFICIAL RACE WALKING DEFINITION

Race Walking is a progression of steps so taken that the walker makes contact with the ground, so that no visible (to the human eye) loss of contact occurs. The advancing leg must be straightened (i.e. not bent at the knee) from the moment of first contact with the ground until the vertical upright position.

The I.A.A.F. Rule draws attention to the two vital phases in every Race Walking stride we term simply as 'Contact' and 'Knees'



Figure 1:
Contact

Double Support – both feet on ground



Figure 2:
Knees

Knee is straightened until leg is upright,
in the vertical position.

CONTACT

The first stride is when the athlete is transferring the body weight from one foot to the other. If the back foot is lifted before the advancing foot reaches the ground, this means that unbroken contact with the ground has not been maintained. So the rule has been broken. Therefore it is essential that the advancing foot be down on the ground before the rear foot is allowed to lift from the ground.

When both feet are on the ground at the same time, it is referred to as DOUBLE SUPPORT (Fig 1). The Walk Judge must see that this situation occurs at every stride - if only for a fraction of a second.

KNEES

The definition requires that the Advancing leg be kept straightened from the point of first contact with the ground until the vertical upright position. (Fig 2) i.e. at 90 degrees to the ground.

What does "straightened" mean? The definition says "NOT BENT AT THE KNEE"

The advancing leg is the leg that must support the body as the trailing leg leaves the ground. It must be straightened from its point of first contact with the ground until it is vertically under the body.

Note that having a "Bent Knee" accounts for the largest number of disqualifications in Little Athletics Race Walk events.

RULES FOR WALK JUDGING AND DISQUALIFICATION

At State Championships, the panel for each event will be set up by the Race Walking Committee representative. No more than two Race Walk Judges from one Centre will officiate in the same event. Centres and special event days will have their own rules applying to the appointment of judging panels.

If the organising body has not appointed a Chief Race Walk Judge, the judges present shall elect one, who is usually the highest Graded Race Walk Judge.

All Race Walk Judges shall act in an individual capacity and must not discuss the legality of walkers while judging a race.

CAUTIONS

If a Race Walk Judge believes that an athlete is in danger of losing Contact with the ground, or straightening of the legs is doubtful (Knees), the Race Walk Judge can give a **CAUTION**. The following must be noted.

A Race Walk Judge may CAUTION an athlete for each offence. i.e. once for danger of losing Contact, and once for doubtful leg straightening (Knees).

Cautions have no bearing on any possible disqualifications, however they are recorded for the Judges own information.

Cautions cannot be given to athletes in their last lap.

ALL age groups receive VERBAL Cautions.

When issuing a Caution, call the athlete's number first to attract his/her attention and then speak loudly so you can be heard.

Inform the athlete in this manner – "**Number 10, Caution – Contact**", or "**Number 20, Caution - Knees**"

If being used, yellow paddles / boards with the symbol of the offence shall also be raised to inform the athlete. These are for **U13- U16 athletes only**.

A Race Walk Judge must not Caution an athlete who they have already Reported.

REPORTS

When a Race Walk Judge forms the **definite** opinion that an athlete has failed to comply with the rules, the Race Walk Judge must take the following action:

Make a **REPORT**. How this is communicated is age group dependant.

Up to and including U10 - athletes receive Verbal Reports.

U11 – U16 age groups receive Non – Verbal Reports. The Reports for these age groups are silent and the athlete is not aware of them.

Inform the athlete in this manner – “**Number 10, Report – Contact**”, or “**Number 20, Report - Knees**”, this is for verbal reports.

The call should be made as soon as the offence has been detected.

At times, it may be difficult or impractical to inform the athlete at the point of the infringement. There may be noise (Public Address etc.) or the athlete may be too far from you and moving further away at every stride. In such cases inform the athlete at the next sighting – usually next lap.

Complete the LAVic Race Walking Judges Pad, listing the name of the event, date, judge’s name / number, athlete’s number and infringement type. At the conclusion of the event, the sheet must be returned to the Chief Race Walk Judge or their Assistant, even if it is blank.

You do not have to Caution before you Report.

You do not have to Report after a Caution unless you confirm the offence.

Note also that once a Race Walk Judge has Reported an athlete, he or she must not Report or Caution that athlete again in that race.

The Chief Race Walk Judge shall then complete the Chief Race Walk Judges Master sheet and determine if any athletes should be disqualified. They shall then inform any Athletes and Recorders of any disqualifications. Note that the Chief Race Walk Judge or their Assistant is the only person that shall inform an athlete of a disqualification, and the reasons for it. The number of Reports needed for disqualification depends on the number of Race Walk Judges available in each event, as per the list below:

- 3 Race Walk Judges on the panel – 2 Reports;
- 4, 5, 6, or 7 Race Walk Judges – 3 Reports.

At a LAVic State Championships or Region Track & Field, there are normally seven (7) Race Walk Judges used, including the Chief Race Walk Judge, but at Centre level there is often difficulty in getting Race Walk Judges. Three (3) Race Walk Judges should be considered as a minimum for satisfactory judging.

THE ART OF JUDGING

It is essential for a Race Walk Judge to be able to detect infringements during a race. This we will call “The Art of Judging” - an art that can require quite a lot of practice to achieve!

Although all Race Walk Judges are bound by the same set of rules, techniques will vary from one Race Walk Judge to another. Each Race Walk Judge tends to develop his/ her own way of detecting infringements.

CONTACT

First we are going to look at LOSS OF CONTACT: (Fig 3)

As mentioned earlier, the moment when the athlete may lose contact with the ground (i.e.) failure to have the advancing foot reach the ground before the rear foot leaves the ground - is when the advancing foot is about to finish its forward swing and contacts the ground.



Figure 3: Loss of Contact – both feet off the ground at the same time.
The rear leg has left the ground, before the advancing leg has made contact with the ground.

INDICATORS OF LOSS OF CONTACT

These are not official terms, and are not found in the definition. They describe the two basic faults that can cause loss of contact, and are an indication only of possible loss of contact.

The Flat Footed Style is caused by lifting the rear leg too early in the stride. As soon as this occurs the body is not supported, so the advancing foot must fall and drop short in front of the walker, or drop under the body in order to hold it up. This fault is observed by watching the advancing foot, and when contact is lost the fall under or just in front of the body is observed.

Usually the foot lands flat. This occurs when a walker is attempting speed which he/ she cannot control. In other words, the walker is exceeding his/ her safe walking speed.

In some cases this infringement may be very clear, but it may occur for a few strides only, perhaps intermittently during the race, or only at the start or in a hard finish.

Do not be misled by a naturally short striding walker. It is what the advancing foot is seen to do that is the indication, but the judgment is for the Race Walk Judge to make.

The Overstriding Style is indicated by an excessively long stride. The advancing leg is swung high and long and is still travelling forward clear of the ground when the rear foot leaves the ground. It is likely to occur when an athlete tries to increase speed, often at the start or in a desperate finish.

Do not be misled by a naturally long striding walker. There are several characteristic pointers, indicators or signs in an athlete's mode of progression. These indicators will serve to arouse your suspicion as an athlete approaches your judging position, and you will concentrate especially on that athlete as he/ she passes and make a decision one way or another.

COMMON FAULTS

Head and shoulder bobbing

The Race Walk Judge suspects that the athlete is dropping on to the advancing foot because the rear foot is being lifted while the advancing foot is still in the air. As the body drops on to the advancing foot and rises for the next stride, the body is seen to bob at each stride.

The advancing foot dropping short instead of landing out in front.

The Race Walk Judge suspects that the rear foot has been lifted when the advancing foot is off the ground and still travelling forward.

Landing flat footed

It is difficult to walk fast with flat footed landing without getting into the Flat Footed style. The Flat Footed style landing often makes a plopping sound.

Leaning Back or Forward

Leaning forward reduces stride length due to the pelvis being thrust behind the walker. The competitor's advancing foot sometimes drops short and flat at speed and a flat footed run may result. Leaning back too far makes it difficult to get adequate stride length, and leads to the advancing foot finishing its stride in the air and dropping back sharply even though often still landing on the heel.

High Shoulders

High shoulders usually lift the carriage of the body, which could cause the stride to finish in the air. As the stride has been completed, the rear foot begins to leave the ground and the advancing foot begins to drop often landing flat at excessive speed. It will be up to the Race Walk Judge to decide whether the rear foot has been held down long enough.

JUDGING HINTS

At a distant view, watch for suspect modes of progression, but do not make a final decision until the athlete is in your area of judging. Do not make a decision from the front straight of a competitor in the back straight, or jump to a hasty conclusion of an approaching athlete on suspect alone. You have to wait until the progression of the athlete can be observed clearly.

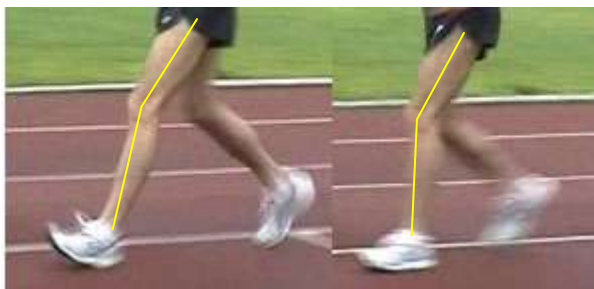
As the athlete moves closer to you concentrate on one leg, following the movement of this leg stride by stride, concentrating mainly on watching the foot at the end of the forward swing (advancing leg). From the point of contact with the ground, the advancing leg shall be seen to remain straightened until this leg is in the vertical position.

You may observe evidence of contact with the ground possibly being lost by noticing the suspect signs from a distance, but the final determination will be made by watching the FEET. This can only be determined when the athlete is in your area of judging.

KNEES

There is no mention in the rules of having to lock the knee. Some athletes because of their build may do so, but all athletes must ensure that the advancing leg is straightened from the first point of contact with the ground until vertical. (Fig 4)

How straight does the leg have to be? A good indication is the tightness of the skin at the rear of the knee. Each athlete must be assessed for his /her ability to have a straightened leg – it's the firmness that counts.



(Fig 4): First picture shows an athlete landing with a bent knee. The second picture shows the athlete with a bent knee before the vertical upright position. Both cases, the athlete should receive a Report for Knees.

PROCEDURE OF JUDGING

Race Walk Judges should stand a reasonable distance from the athlete's as they approach, preferably at the outside of the track. The best Judging angle is from 45 degrees as the athlete's approach you, to 45 degrees as they move away. Outside this zone you may form an incorrect opinion of the athlete's style, and whether an infringement is occurring. In particular, you should avoid rear extreme judging or trying to judge from across the arena.

You should ensure that your view is not impeded by the raised edge of the track.

Don't encroach on the next Race Walk Judge's area.

Don't move more than a few paces either side of your Judging area and don't follow the athlete's or run alongside them.

Keep your distance from an athlete unless you intend to issue a Caution or a Report.

The Rules do not allow a Race Walk Judge to report any other infringement.

Track Umpires and Referees shall perform the same functions as they do for other events, but must not adjudicate on Race Walking rules.

DUTIES OF THE CHIEF RACE WALK JUDGE

The Chief Race Walk Judge should be present at least 30 minutes prior to starting time of the event. The Chief Walk Judge should check that the track is free from any other equipment such as Hurdles etc, and other officials are briefed on the conduct of the event.

Allocate each member of the judging panel a position on the track ensuring that the entire track is fully covered. At State Track & Field a minimum of two Race Walk Judges will be required at the start and finish of the event; one of which must be the Chief Race Walk Judge.

Prior to the event, the Chief Race Walk Judge shall identify himself / herself to the athlete's and advise them of the judging procedure for the event. The Chief Race Walk Judge PRE RACE TALK must be given.

This should include Reporting and Cautioning procedures, race length, number of Race Walk Judges, and Rules of Walking.

The Chief Race Walk Judge shall receive the Race Walk Judges report slips at the conclusion of the event and record the reports on the Chief Race Walk Judge's Master Sheet. This is used to determine the number of Reports that the athletes have received, and if any Race Walkers are to be disqualified.

The Chief Race Walk Judge or their Assistant, is the only person who should notify Athletes and Recording Officials of any disqualifications. Be tolerant with the athletes and give reasons for any disqualifications.

RACE WALK JUDGE GRADING LEVELS

A Grade Race Walk Judges

Qualified to Judge and act as Chief Race Walk Judge at any level of competition.

B Grade Race Walk Judges

Qualified to Judge at any level, and to act as Chief Judge at Region Track & Field and at Centre level.

C Grade Race Walk Judges

Qualified to Judge at Centre level and at Region Track & Field.

D Grade Race Walk Judges

Qualified to Judge at Centre level.

All graded Race Walk Judges and Centre officials should endeavour to introduce new Race Walk Judges into their Centres. Often events cannot be conducted because of the lack of Race Walk Judges. It is important that graded Race Walk Judges assist newcomers to complete the 'D' Grade requirements. Lower level Race Walk Judges should seek a higher grading. This can be arranged through the Region Race Walks Co-ordinator.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF RACE WALK JUDGING

Don't believe that the proof of a good Race Walk Judge is in how many athletes he / she reports. If in doubt, give the benefit to the athlete. If you can't form an opinion, don't penalise the athlete. Often the lower grade inexperienced Race Walk Judges are the harshest on an athlete. After an event, see how your reports and cautions line up with the other Race Walk Judges. At State Track & Field, it is not unusual for Race Walk Judges not to give any reports at all in a race.

A good Race Walk Judge can assist athletes who may be having some difficulty, by the sensible use of a Caution before an infringement actually occurs.

Do not believe that most of the athletes are breaking the rules. Generally only a small percentage of the athletes in each race will warrant a Report.

If you form an opinion either to Report or Caution, act at once. Don't hesitate or you may lose your confidence which may affect your later decisions. Speak loudly so the athlete can hear you, but don't shout which may upset the athlete or tell other nearby Race Walk Judges what you are doing. If the athlete does not hear your call he/ she may continue on thinking all is well.

Do not prejudge. What an athlete may do in a race one day, he/ she may not do in the next.

Do not be influenced by outside opinion. Make up your own mind about each athlete. Don't be biased.

Judging is strictly individual. It is your opinion only as to whether the athlete is conforming to the rules.

Do not let your judging border on intimidation by running close behind an athlete. Move alongside for a few strides if you wish, but keep your distance unless you want to address the athlete.

CODE OF ETHICS FOR GRADED RACE WALK JUDGES

This Code seeks to provide a basis upon which all Race Walk Judges under the jurisdiction of Little Athletics Victoria can carry out their tasks effectively, efficiently and with dignity.

The CODE OF ETHICS requires the Race Walk Judge to perform the following:

- Promote Race Walking throughout the Little Athletics movement.
- Conduct himself/herself in a manner suitable to and in accordance with his or her position.
- Conduct lectures for the education and grading of Race Walk Judges.
(B Grade and above)
- Judge in any LAVic competition as allowed by your grading.
- Officiate as a Chief Race Walk Judge at State Championships.
(A Grade Judges only)
- Participate in coaching clinics.
- Carry out the task of judging with fairness and integrity.
- Respect the decision of fellow Race Walk Judges.
- Aspire to be upgraded to a higher level.

LAVic RACE WALKING

FUNDAMENTALS OF COACHING

This training guide has been prepared primarily to assist new Race Walk Judges gain a better understanding of walking techniques in Little Athletics. It is understandable that some coaches will use these notes as a basis for their coaching at Centre level.

Race Walking is a unique event, and those involved with it must be aware of what can cause an athlete to infringe the rules. They must then be able to assist the walker to rectify the faults. This is most important in Little Athletic ranks because during Saturday morning competition a good Centre will encourage its Race Walk Judges to combine coaching and judging especially in the first half of the season, gradually putting more emphasis on judging as the year progresses. Quite often Centres do not have a walk coach, therefore athletes and their parents will turn to the Race Walk Judge for guidance.

Knowledge of styles of walking is also very helpful when judging at serious events such as Open Days, Region Track & Field and State Track & Field Championships.

A good, properly trained Race Walk Judge should be able to offer some advice to the infringing athletes after the race. This may include some technique training or exercises to overcome the problem which caused the athlete to lose contact or not abide by the straightening of the knee rule. In many cases this advice is sought by the parents or the athletes themselves.

The guide does not attempt to make Coaches or Race Walk Judges overnight. It takes time studying, perseverance and a lot of patience, but we will endeavour to explain the fundamentals upon which a Coach or a Race Walk Judge can build on in the years ahead.

RACE WALKING RULES

There are only two rules of Race Walking to be satisfied. These relate to maintaining foot contact, straightening of the advancing leg and an unbent knee. An athlete cannot be reported for bad posture, not holding his/her arms correctly, or bouncing.

It is important however, to be aware of the various errors in techniques, because experience shows that certain bad habits are apt to cause the athlete to lose contact or to not be able to straighten the leg.

That is where some knowledge in coaching will keep the Race Walk Judge in good stead by being able to suggest some exercises or training techniques which can help to rectify the problem.

There are varied opinions describing the main difference between RACE WALKING and RUNNING.

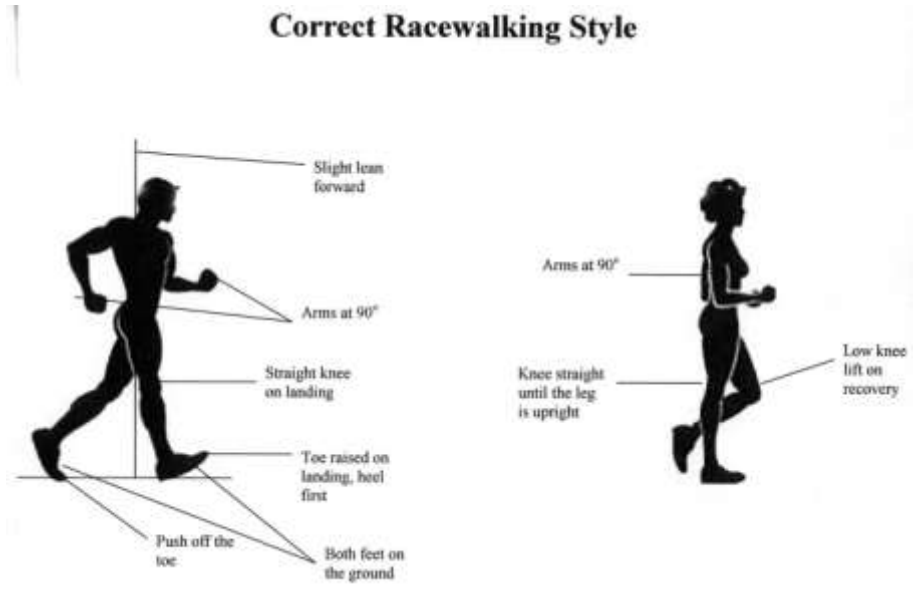
A Race Walker is required to maintain continuous contact with the ground, whereas in running, both feet are off the ground during the flight phase, and there is only a single support on each stride length.

THE IDEAL RACE WALKER

Young Athletes are all different with individual physiques and at various stages of development and corresponding level of strength. The task of the Coach is to develop each athletes own technique within these assets or limitations as the case maybe.

From past experience and using the increasing knowledge of the anatomy of men and women, we have created a mythical "Ideal Race Walker". With this and the improving training techniques, coaches should strive to emulate this ideal race walker in the athletes under their care.

Ideally, the closer we get our athletes to emulate this “Ideal Race Walker” (Fig 5) the greater are the chances of success. It must be stressed again however, that this is not always the case, and that there are exceptions to the rule.



(Fig 5): Ideal position of a Race Walker.

The pictures below demonstrate the Correct Race Walking Style with a straighten leg on contact and part of the foot in contact with the ground at all times.



(Fig 6): The Race Walker is demonstrating sound Race Walking technique, the front foot strikes the ground, preferably on the heel, before the back leg leaves the ground. The leg is straightened on contact with the ground until it is in the upright position.

The ideal Race Walker should have:-

- An upright and relaxed carriage, not stiff, not leaning forward or backward excessively. A breakdown in technique can lead to a rule infringement. There should be no more than a 5 degree lean.
- The head resting squarely on the shoulders, not to one side or flopping around, so that there is no tension on the neck muscles.
- The hands should be slightly closed with the thumb resting on the fore finger; the thumb should be the uppermost digit, again so that there is no tension, this time on the arm muscles.
- The arms bent at approximately 90 degrees and not straightened during the race, and not bent and then straightened during the movement of the arms through the shoulders. Note that the arms play a big part in ensuring correct Race Walking technique. Arms and shoulders are used to absorb trunk rotation caused by a powerful leg and hip action.
- The arm swing should be to the mid line of the body with the hands coming up to chest height. The backward swing of the arms should bring the hands down to the hip region.
- Flexible hips so that a fluent oscillating movement may be achieved to give length to the stride with a forward movement, and be able to drop to assist the advancing leg to get to the ground quickly. If the hips sway from side to side the Race Walker will reduce speed, shorten stride length, affect balance and arm action and may inflame the hip socket.
- To lift the knee just high enough for the action of Race Walking to be carried out; too high a lift will only increase the time factor that the foot is off the ground.

The ideal Race Walker should have:-

- The heel of the advancing foot should make firm contact with the ground. This is important in assisting the advancing leg to be straightened at first contact with the ground, and be maintained straight until it is in the vertically upright position. This is a requirement of the rules of Race Walking. Note that the advancing leg does not have to be straight as it moves forward.
- Both the advancing and trailing leg should be straight at the moment of double support. (The time when both feet are on the ground together). This would achieve ultimate stride and there would be no danger of the trailing leg losing contact too soon. But remember we are talking about coaching and no rule is infringed if the rear/trailing leg is not straight at the time of double contact.
- Teach your athletes to walk a straight line, thus gaining metres in a race.
- Excessive lifting or dipping of the shoulders will reduce speed and restrict arm action. A slight dip will occur towards the supporting leg in each stride. But this must be kept to a minimum.

COACHING

When coaching beginners it is very important to forget about speed and concentrate on technique.

The athletes will Race Walk faster as their technique improves. The best way to begin is to let the athletes walk the normal way and gradually introduce the various techniques as listed. This should start with the movement of the arms, gradually introducing other techniques pertinent to the other parts of the body.

A coach must be wary not to bore the athletes and should keep the session interesting. If an athlete is slow in producing the required results for one part of the body – move on to another part, return to the original part at a later date. For the athletes to derive the most benefit, it is essential that a program be drawn up with as much variety as possible to eliminate boredom.

TRAINING

Correct training is essential. Whilst coaching is more involved in teaching techniques, training is the acquisitions of stamina and speed, depending on the type of training undertaken. Normally a training program would involve the acquisition of both aerobic and anaerobic skills.

It is not always possible for the coach to supervise all the training sessions, nevertheless it is up to the coach to draw up the program and supervise at least some parts of it to ensure that the correct technique is being maintained. Alternate if possible between distance and speed work.

WARMING UP AND STRETCHING

Warming up prior to the coaching session, or any walk training is most important. This pre-requisite becomes more vital as the athlete reaches maturity. Therefore it is important to teach young athletes good habits from the start, explaining the reason why the warm up period varies depending on the age of the athlete.

There are many types of stretching exercises that can be taught. Some of these have been included at the rear of these coaching notes. (Walking Mobility Exercises)

One important point in the selection and usage of stretching exercises is to select those that will cover all the vital parts of the body, and then to alternate between the lower and upper part of the body during the warm up session.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES AND DRILLS

In this section there are lessons that are outlined with accompanying drills. These lessons are designed to develop in beginners a sound Race Walking technique. The emphasis throughout the lesson is on maximising involvement and minimising inactivity.

LESSON 1 – RACE WALKING POSTURE

The first lesson is designed to develop good posture in those athletes who do not already have it, and to reinforce good posture in those athletes that do.

Ask new athletes to do a lap using their normal street walking styles. This will show the coach what needs to be done to adjust and improve their techniques.

Points to look for

- Slumped or rounded shoulders or upper spine

- Bending forward from the hips

- Sway back

Athletes with any of these postural problems need a corrective drill.

Drills

Arms behind the back, clasp hands, push the backs of the hands against the hips, shoulders back.

At this stage posture should be fairly correct.

Now commence brisk walking, with arms behind back, pushing the hips into a forward position.

If done correctly, the athlete, when viewed from side-on will have the shoulder joint in a straight line through the hip joint, the knee joint, and the ankle joint.

LESSON 2 - ARM CARRIAGE

In lesson 2 we introduce arm carriage. It is extremely important to develop the correct arm action, because arm action controls balance and speed, and can have a quite positive effect on stride length.

- Have athletes set their arms at 90 degrees. Modify any incorrect arm action such as:
- Arms held too high (acute angle) allowing action to come up into line with the neck region and allowing forward swing to cross midline.
- Arms commencing in the 90 degree angle, then dropping to 120 degree with the backward swing.
- Shoulder lifting, tension around the neck and shoulder area.
- Shoulders too rigid and head lifting too far backwards or forwards.
- Shoulder swinging forward too much.
- Forearms chopping downwards on the rear drive.

Arm Drills

Arms high, one can also get athletes to walk with arms folded on chest.

LESSON 3 - LOWER BODY ACTION

The aim of Lesson 3 is to develop a good lower body action. Assemble athletes in a circle (with experienced role models in the centre). Emphasise that driving force should be applied along a straight line – the direction of the hips, knees and feet must always travel in a straight line.

Stand athletes with arms at 90 degrees, good posture, with feet 5 – 10cm apart. Now bend one knee and at the same time lift the heel of this leg, ask them to feel their hip drop and move forward toward an imaginary line, without their toe leaving the ground. At this stage, correct any athlete whose support leg and hip is not holding firm – the support hip must not be thrust sideways.

Now straighten this knee, bend the other knee and repeat the sequence. Keep this exchange going, emphasising the hips/knees moving forward towards a centre line and the arms moving rhythmical with the hip action, while breathing is controlled.

This is called “walking on the spot” and can be practiced at home in front of a full-length mirror where the athlete can get an immediate feedback of an incorrect action – and correct it.

LESSON 4 - PROGRESSION

Commence with a “walking on the spot” movement as soon as the body weight is over the dropped hips, have the opposite foot push the body forward.

Stop when this step is taken and restart on the opposite leg. Ask the athletes to push hips, knees and feet along a straight line.

The next step is to supply sufficient speed only to omit the hesitation between each step.

Points to look for:

- (1) The sideways drift of the support hip.
- (2) Lifting the rear foot off the ground before the rolling action finishes at the toe drive.
- (3) Feet and hips landing in line with the shoulders.
- (4) Poor arm action.
- (5) Postural problems.

Drills

To correct 1. With correct posture, walk up a flight of stairs with only the toes on the steps, using vertical movement of the hips, combined with mobility and strength of ankles to climb the stairs.

To correct 2. Go back to the first part of this lesson – the stop-start action. Have the athlete concentrate on the rolling action of the foot while avoiding flickering the lower leg and straightening the knee too soon, as this forces early contact, pulling the support foot off the ground before the roll is completed.

To correct 3. Have the athlete walk along a marked line (eg, lane line). Work on improving their pelvic rotation. Correct any incorrect arm swing as this will also prevent straight line walking. All athletes should be able to travel down a straight lane line, with feet falling on the centre of the line, without looking down.

TAKING CARE OF FLAWS

Arms held too high

Leads to lifting as the body's centre of gravity is pulled higher.

To correct this flaw, get the athletes to walk with arms folded on the chest or with hands grasped at the small of the back.

Tilting the head too far forward or back

This cause is mainly due to fatigue; in addition if the lean is too far forward the trailing foot is pulled away too soon. To correct this flaw is to relax the neck and upper body.

Race Walking with feet tracking two parallel lines turning the feet too far outward

This practice leads to lifting because the correct heel-toe contact is not possible. To correct this flaw, walk with both feet coming down on a straight line, such as the lane line marked on the track.

“Goose Stepping”

Race Walking with the thigh coming forward too quickly and the leg extended before touching down.

Correct heel-toe contact is not possible, and it may result in loss of contact.

“Flat Footed Running”

Landing with the forward foot flat instead of on the heel.

Correct heel-toe contact should be concentrated on. If not corrected this may result in loss of contact or not allowing the knee to straighten at first point of contact, as the momentum of the athlete will push the knee forward and bend.

Excessive backward or forward lean

These flaws can be corrected by walking with a pole held behind the back in the bend of the elbows. Stand with the advancing foot in contact with the ground at the heel, trailing foot in lift-off position, in contact with the toe. Shift the body weight back and forth between the two.

Insufficient hip rotation

The athletes stride is limited, and if speed is attempted a short stride inevitably leads to lifting, loss of contact.

To correct- exaggerated proper hip motion by overstriding and crossing over (drunken walking).

Sometimes a combination of two or more of the above is required, and it is only through perseverance and experience that the problem can be detected and corrected.

THE START AND FINISH OF THE RACE

The athletes must be trained to Race Walk the full distance, maintaining the correct technique throughout the race. Many disqualifications occur at the beginning and at the end of the race. Teach them to Race Walk each lap at the same speed, only increasing speed if possible on the last lap. Too many athletes come out of the start very fast and then fade away.

THE START

When the gun goes off, it is important that the forward leg is straight and not bent as if you were starting a running race. The foot should be flat on the ground, without the toe being up. If the toe is up, this could lead to a false start if the toe touches the start line once the gun goes off. Additionally the second movement of the toe coming down is adding time to the athletes start, as the athlete needs to start moving forward. Depending on the position draw, decide on the best line to take to the inside of the track.

Outside Draw

Stay outside until the scrimmage clears, then move safely into the inside.

In the Middle

Same procedure as above.

Inside Draw

The hardest position of all. An all out effort must be made to hold the position and not be boxed in.

THE FINISH

The athlete must maintain the correct technique until well past the finishing line, especially in a close finish. The athletes are tired and their technique starts to breakdown as they race to the finish line. It is easy to pick up 3 reports in the last 60 metres of an event, particularly for loss of contact.

RACE WALKING MOBILITY EXERCISES

Before embarking on the following exercise program, coaches should make their own assessment of the ability of each athlete to safely carry out the exercises as described.

In some cases, it may not be in the best interests of the athlete to attempt an exercise unless it can be modified to take into account some form of disability, or other limiting factor.

Coaches must also ensure that any exercise program to be delivered must be carried out in a safe environment, clear of obstruction and without risk to the health and safety of the athletes, or the adults involved in conducting the program.

Appropriate exercises can be selected from the following list:

Stand with feet together. Arms hanging by sides. Bend each knee in turn so that the hip drops. Brace the other knee back straight.

- with feet kept flat on the ground.
- with heels lifting from the ground.

Repeat above with arms bent at right angles driving as though walking. (walking on the spot)

Stand with feet together. Arms out to the side. Keep arms as still as possible while rotating hips slowly.

Repeat above with arms in walking position. Speed up rotation of hips and arm drive while keeping a good turn of hips. (not just a bottom wiggle)

Walk along a straight line.

Walk in a snaking path (snaking walk) across two lanes; then across one lane.

Snake walk using a straight line to guide you. Take two or three steps on either side of the line each time you cross it.

“The Drunken Walk” Walk slowly with shorter than normal strides, placing left foot to right side and right foot to left side of a straight line.

Walk at varying speeds with arms folded behind back.

Walk with arms folded in front –

- held low
- at shoulder height

Walk with long strides, hands clasped in front of the body at shoulder level with arms bent at right angles at the elbows.

Repeat above while taking shorter strides, and with feet crossing either side of a straight line.

Walking with hands clasped and arms up straight over the head.

Repeat above with arms swaying from side to side in time with each stride.

Walk with arm out to sides, concentrating on hip rotation.

Walk holding one arm straight by side, while other is held at right angles to the body as though giving a turn signal.

Repeat above with turn signal arm rotating in an anti-clockwise direction.

Walk at moderate speed in a circle. Start with a large circle and make the circle smaller, keeping the stride long.

Keeping the stride long, walk in a figure-eight path.

Walk, swinging the leg through relaxed until heel touches the ground. Then tense the leg, keeping it braced as it drives the body forward.

CONCLUSION

Perfect practice makes perfect, as practising poor technique makes permanent. Athletes must practice and train to achieve their goals; likewise Race Walk Judges and Coaches should train and practice if they want to achieve a good consistent standard.

Train your eyes and minds to detect infringements of the rules, and to recognise the flaws which in most cases are causing the infringements.

It is important to act as a Race Walk Judge frequently, and to attend as many coaching sessions as possible. Listen to and watch the experienced Race Walk Judges and Coaches. Ask them questions.

Finally, remember that as Officials of LAVic our main concern is the welfare of the athletes. We are, in association with their parents and teachers, moulding their characters and installing in them a sense of fun and enjoyment, fair play and sportsmanship.

