



## HOW TO MAKE RACE WALK JUDGING DECISIONS

To make a call, the Race Walk judge must develop a method. Top USA Judges use the following sequence in making judgments. They first look at an approaching group from the distance for motions that distinguish individuals from the group. As the group approaches, they look for more specific indicators. Not paying attention to the rest of the competitors, the experienced Judge then looks more closely at those walkers in his viewing area who have gotten his attention. Lastly, judgments and possible calls are made based solely on the competitor's adherence to the definition of race walking.

### **Indicators That May Attract the Race Walk Judge's Attention**

While observing groups of competitors outside your viewing area, look for competitors who appear to be jogging, shuffling or bobbing up and down, they may be bent kneed or loosing contact. They look obviously out of the "norm" and need closer scrutiny.

When these athletes enter your viewing area, look for these indicators:

- 1.) Over striding and under striding that may lead to loss of contact or bent knee.
- 2.) High back kick after toe-off that may lead to loss of contact.
- 3.) High forward knee drive that may raise the body's center of mass and lead to loss of contact.
- 4.) A too high an arm swing and/or lifting of the shoulders that may pull the body up and off the ground leading to loss of contact.

If you observe any of these techniques, watch the competitor more closely or wait until the next lap or circuit to decide if you need to make a call.

### **Making calls**

To make a judgment, look first for contact, and then for straightening of the leg at the knee. If you decide to make a call on the competitor, the call must be based on the definition of race walking and not the earlier indicators that brought attention to the competitor. If you are in doubt about making a call, give the benefit of doubt to the athlete and do not make a call.

#### 1.) Visible Loss of Contact Calls:

A Red Card (proposal for disqualification) for visible loss of contact is given when you see the rear foot of the competitor leave the ground before the front foot makes contact with the ground. Lack of continuous contact is visible when the rear toe and front heel are both off of the ground at the same time.

You may give a Caution for potential loss of contact when you see:

- a.) Continued extension of the ankle after toe off, when the rear foot is lifted from the ground.
- b.) First contact with the ground made with a flat foot.
- c.) First contact with the ground made under the body.
- d.) Extreme forward lean that places the torso in front of the lead foot at contact with the ground.

## 2.) Bent Knee Calls:

Red Cards for bent knee are given when you see either of two technique flaws:

- a.) Flexion (bending) of the support leg at the knee when weight is put on it. Flexion of the leg is marked by contraction of the long muscles at the front of the thigh. These muscles are forced to eccentrically contract because the leg is not been straightened at the knee. When the leg is straightened on contact the muscles at the front of the thigh remain relaxed.
- b.) Flexion of the support leg at the knee when in single stance at any point after contact with the ground before the leg reaches the vertical position.

You may give a Caution for potential bent knee when you cannot clearly see contraction or relaxation of the support leg's front thigh muscles or when the walker appears to be walking very stiff legged.

Cautions and Red Cards for bent leg ought not to be given if the athlete hyper-extends the leg at the knee, is bowlegged, has large thighs, or has protruding knees. Do not look to see if the leg is "straight" but rather look to see if the leg is straightened at the knee. Failure to straighten the leg at the knee at contact or during stance before the vertical position is really a matter of the support leg not being locked upon contact, or failure to keep the knee locked until the body has passed the vertical position.

### Summary

Once you decide to make a call, act on it. You are part of a panel. Keep in mind, that the system of Cautions and Red Cards is for the athlete's benefit. Your signal with the yellow paddle and the posting of Red Cards in championship races gives the competitor a chance to correct before disqualification. A caution or a single Red Card does not hurt an athlete. Your independent decision only affects the athlete negatively if a collective decision reaches the same conclusion you did. Competitors may be cautioned by all of the Judges (possibly for both infractions) without disqualification. If two or more other Race Walk Judges see what you see, an athlete violating the definition of race walking, then collective but independent panel ensures the fairness of the competition for all.