

Planning Outline for Race Walk Championship/Trial Events

Elements from a report by Lawrie Robertson
Redesigned by Diane Graham-Henry
augmented by Steve Vaitones, Ron Daniel

Procedures once event has been awarded...

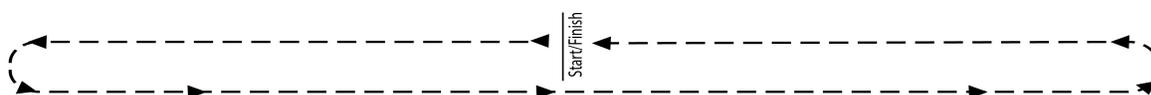
USATF Event Sanction

Sanctioning, which provides liability insurance and certificates of insurance for third parties, is available online at: <http://www.usatf.org/Products---Services/Event-Sanctions.aspx>

Sanctioning is done in two parts; add the event to the USATF Calendar, sanction and request certificates of insurance.

Course Design

The ideal course is shaped like a long oval of no shorter than 1k and no longer than 2k. The loop should be composed of long straights permitting two-way judging opportunities for each judge and a single, wide turn at each end. The course shall be certified by a qualified course certifier.



Example of ideal road course set up.

Course considerations:

Course should have as little elevation change as possible. Where there are surface issues; cracks, change in surface, holes, etc.; mark with cones or flags. Athletes should be aware of all changes.

Turns and Course Marking:

Turns are where most courses are flawed. Turns not only have to be wide, but cone placements must be spray painted onto the road surface to assure proper placement on race day. If at all possible, the person responsible for certifying the course should be the sole person responsible for actually placing the cones on race day. This person and the Referee should make a final check of the course to verify proper placement not more than 30 minutes prior to the start time (armed with spare cones and the authority to countermand any other person's decisions). To ensure record integrity, pictures of the placement would also be useful.

Starting and Finishing Procedures:

Clerk should ensure athletes numbers are clearly visible on the front and the back. Call athletes to start area to leave time for Chief Judge to instruct the athletes. Start and Finish procedures should be in event manual to the athletes and the staff/crew managing this area. Clearly informed athletes are less stressed. Number of laps for the distance of the race should be clearly posted.

Start and Finish lines should be clearly marked, and coned. Arrows leading the finish area are helpful.

Timing and Clocks:

It is best to have two clocks available. Placed in the center of the course for good visibility for the athletes. One facing east, one facing west or north/south. The extra clock makes splits more available to the athletes when the course is set up with start/finish in the middle of the course. Timing personnel should be isolated so no interference can occur during the race.

Event Support

Police:

It is important that the course be cleared of all vehicular traffic at least 2 hours prior to the start of the road event and for 1.5 hours following the event completion by the last finisher. It generally takes that long to assure safe set-up and takedown. Often the police either close off the entire course too late or open it up too early. Police need to be distributed along the course since marshals may require their assistance. Officers at either end of the course are able to maintain clearance of the turn area of traffic and pedestrians.

Support Equipment and Location:

Optimally, the DQ Board, Chief Judge's recorder, umpires, and split timing/lap counting personnel should be located in the middle of the street between the two sides of the course (i.e. visible to competitors and easy to make off-limits to coaches and spectators). If this is not possible it is advised these personnel are protected from coaches and spectators so they function without interruptions. It is critical that competitors have unobstructed views of the DQ Board personnel, lap counters and lap scorers/split timers have clear visibility of the competitors they are responsible for recording and timing, and all spectators and coaches are prevented from accessing these areas. Restrooms for spectators also need to be provided so that they stay out of those for athletes and officials and do not cross the course. Clear signage on the restrooms will aid this process.

Refreshment Tables:

The refreshment tables should be placed on the right side of the walking course at least 6-8 feet in from the tangent line (in from the left edge) on a straight portion of the course about 100 meters prior to a turn to avoid slowing the field and to permit competitors to ignore the tables if they choose. Tables should be consistently placed in a series with the water table first, then personal refreshment, and then a final water table. This approach permits those who fail to find/secure their personal refreshment to at least get water. For the 50k and 20k,

each competitor is entitled to designate one “special refreshment” handler to stand at this table and distribute this refreshment to his/her competitor.

Personal refreshment tables (six-foot) should accommodate two athletes per, with one person providing athlete’s refreshment. Once the final count of the entrants is known, the number of tables required will be made available. Tables should be spaced two to three feet apart.

Water should be dispensed in 4-6 ounce paper cups (so they crush when stepped on and don’t roll or pose a problem for competitors), and are distributed along the table at a minimum of 6” intervals (to avoid being mowed down). There should be enough cups at each refreshment stand for each athletes to received a cup for each lap raced. Volunteers for these tasks should be drawn from experienced road running clubs who understand the process.

Sponges:

Sponges should be available both at 100 meters prior to the refreshment area and 1000 meters after the refreshment table (if the weather warrants). Volunteers need to be assigned to both fill cups (from sealed bottled containers free of any possibility of accusation of tainting), and to scoop up cups and sponges quickly from the course and placed in garbage bags. Sponges should be cut to fit easily in the hand. The sponges should not be wrung, but rather be very wet. (They can only be reused if placed in water container with a touch of bleach, then rinsed in clean water. This may be too much for a large field of athletes.) Be prepared with sufficient sponges to use once. Post race they can be placed in a mesh bag and machine-washed for future use.

Spraying:

Many competitors will not want to be sprayed while some will love it. Thus if used, any spraying should be done by an athlete aware of how to spray properly (a fine spray to the torso, and only the head if requested, never the feet). Spraying should require the walker veer slightly to the outside of the course to receive it (choosing to be sprayed). Water resulting from the spraying area should drain away from the course to prevent build-up.

Medical:

Medical personnel need to be present to address any issues athletes may have. Generally, heat will be the cause of problems, with heat stroke a large contributor. Review of course with medical personnel aids their knowledge of the area and gives them quicker response to issues (less time explaining where the problem is). There needs to be a plan on how to remove an athlete without interrupting the course of the event. Communication system to medical personnel should be made clear prior to race day set up. Medical personnel should be linked by radio communication on the course.

Refreshment for Course Officials:

Do not forget that course personnel and the judges need refreshments as well. Someone should be assigned to circulate the course with liquid refreshments (and some food during 50k). These persons can suffer heat problems, too!

Course Map:

A map should be prepared which indicates the location of such key features as toilets for competitors and officials, lap/split counting, Red Card board, Chief Judge's recorder, spraying station, refreshment and sponging tables, and restrooms. This should be distributed to all athletes, event personnel, judges and key volunteers, as well as medical personnel. The map is useful in providing guide to personnel of their location on the course.

Course Access:

The course areas, which need to be protected, should be cordoned in such a way as to provide good spectator areas, but also to free the competitive area from spectators crossing or coaches getting onto the course, and access for emergency vehicles.

Judging, Officiating and Support Crew

Officials:

Meeting of officials has the election of Chief Judge. Chief Judge determines the judging locations, with location of the 6-9 officials, and three (plus the head judge) for start and finish. Red Card procedure is reviewed. And location of post-race judges meeting. If rotation of officials is planned, this should be made clear during the meeting and sited on the map. Location of referee near DQ Board, start/finish, and entry and exit points. For longer distance events, procedure should be planned when an official needs a bathroom break, leaving no wide gaps in judging. Judges should arrive at course 60 minutes prior to start. A de-briefing meeting should follow the race, after all materials have been given to the recorder, and final assessment of the Summary Sheets/Tally Sheets/Red Cards have been completed. Officials do not leave until this is completed. Post a copy of the Final Summary Sheets near the finish results.

Recorder and staff:

Recorder and DQ Board should be placed a distance before the finish, and ahead of the lap counters/finish line crew. Preferably they should be in the center of the course away from spectators, coaches, and interruptions and interference. Two to three persons will make this easier... The head receives the red cards, then informs the next to place marks on the board; the third to aid where needed (watch for card runners/cyclists).

Cyclists for Red Cards:

At least two cyclist should be planned for and briefed on the procedure of moving around the course in the opposite direction of the athletes and hiding cards when received. Instruct to only hand cards to the recorder. No conversation with the athletes, coaches, officials, spectators during the race is advised.

Umpires:

If umpires are available, they should watch for areas of concern for conduct which is in violation to the running rules on the course, (i.e. course cutting at turns, leaving course to restroom and proper return). In most cases, the race walk officials take this position.

Lap Counters:

Place lap counters before the finish, and make sure they are not in a position for interruptions, interference from their assignment. Best to have experienced personnel for this assignment, so no mistakes are made. Preferable to have no more than 3-4 athletes per lap counter.

Optimally, two athletes per lap counter. They should be in view of a clock to place lap time on the form. They need to inform CLEARLY to their athletes the "laps to go."

NOTE: Lap counters should be introduced to their athlete(s) twenty (20) minutes prior to the start. Lap counters should visually confirm who they are lap counting, and note any clothing or identifying elements for each, so they will always recognize their athlete. Final lap sheets should go to the finish timers post race.

Course Marshalls:

Marshalls should be informed of procedures for key locations: entry and exits, restrooms, and turns. Marshalls need to oversee high traffic areas for safety of athletes, turns, water stations, start and finish. Key is to hold no unnecessary conversations with anyone other than officials, race directors, and key personnel during the race. When able, Marshalls should police the areas they are working for items (bottles or cups), which may hinder the path of the athletes.

Water and refreshment staff:

Personnel at these locations should be instructed on how to hand out the water. Three to four persons per table. No fingers in the cups. Hold cups at bottom, making the athlete able to grab a cup easily. Among the personnel there should be persons who steps on the cups, and picks them up when the course is clear to do so. AVOID interfering with the athletes.

Post Race

Water, fruit and snacks for replenishment of athletes.

Extensive water should be available at the finish for the athletes. Sealed containers which protects athletes from tainting issues. Fruit and snacks are good for replenishment, and should be only for the athletes. There can never be enough, so over estimate these items.

Awards:

Awards should be presented in a timely period post race. If there is a separate location and time for this, it should be listed in the event materials.

Results:

Results need to be posted as quickly as possible, and a display location made clear with signage. The results need to be reported to the USATF website within 24 hours, optimally post race. USATF will remind you if you have not done so.

NOTE: Race Directors/coordinators should not participate in the events they oversee.

Addendum items:

“Day of Event Course Set-up Checklist.”

IAAF “A Guide to Judging and Organizing. A guide for judges, officials, coaches and athletes.”