

Looking back and looking forwards: My race walking highlights!

By Catharine Telling

2011 was one of the most amazing years of my athletics career. It was my first year as a full International Race Walking judge and I went to some utterly brilliant events. I thought I would share some of the highlights with you.

To start with I went to Lisbon and judged an IAAF permit race which was a novel experience for me. We were in a suburb of Lisbon (Rio Major) and the whole town was involved in a festival of sport that included two 20km races. It was one of the fastest and the highest quality field of athletes I had had the privilege to judge. The atmosphere was so friendly and it was a great way for me to practice top level judging as before then my only other race at this level was the European youth Olympics trial in Moscow, 2010.

In June I also went to Ireland to judge their Grand Prix which featured the Small Nations Cup. It was an interesting event with a broad range of walkers from the youngsters getting their first experience of International races; to veterans out to get age related records and many senior athletes using it to get qualification times for Deagu.

In August I was so lucky to officiate at the World Championships in Korea. I judged three fantastic races (20km and 50km men's and 20km women's). The level of competition was thrilling and very challenging for me. I was very nervous about getting it right but I can honestly say I think I made the right decisions.

Korea was so different to anything I had ever experienced. The sheer number and enthusiasm of the spectators was like nothing I had ever experienced before. Throughout all the walks members of the public stopped and watched the whole race cheering and really getting excited. At one point Stu (my husband) gave an impromptu lesson in race walking to keen spectators.

Then there was the atmosphere in the stadium. As an IAAF official I had full access to everywhere (well almost). I saw so many events my head was spinning. I was there on the finish line when Blake won the 100m, when Valarie Adams won the shot and Sally Pearson broke the programme curse. I watched Hannah English and Dai Green triumph; you may even have seen Dai give the thumbs up sign to Stu. It has to be said though that I think if a watch had been running on the photographers during The Bolt's untimely bolt a new world record could have been recorded. I regret to say I was flying home when Mo won the 5km.

I met so many people from all over the world. The funny thing was I met several English officials out there I have never had the opportunity to meet before such as Neils De Vos, members of the London 2012 organising committee and I had breakfast with Lord Coe!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Well ok we were on the next table but it counts surely?

Even on the way home I sat next to Diane Roy, winner of the ladies 800m T54, on the flight home.

Since Korea life's been pretty normal except I organised an official's taster day for Race Walking. It was a success and actually has given some positive impetus to recruiting new officials. In athletics and race walking particularly there is a real problem with succession planning as the officials and coaches are naturally getting older and we need new faces to get involved.

I am very keen to use my experiences and knowledge to help others to get involved. I mean we have "The Games" in London which I and several other members of Worcester AC are taking part in but there is also Glasgow in 2014. Who knows how far you could go, look at me I went half way round the World! It was great and getting better. So if you are interested in getting involved in officiating in athletics, not just Race Walking, feel free to talk to me and I will do what I can to help you.

In the meantime I wish you all a fantastic 2012 and look forward to seeing you all at the various races throughout the year.



All the IAAF Technical officials for the race walks (I'm 3rd from the right).



Me during the ladies 20km.



Day off!