

Nordic Walking

Official Regulations

by European Masters Athletics

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PREAMBLE

Competitive Nordic walking is a sport specialty that is manifested through competitions in which the participants use poles specially designed for the development of this activity, with the aim of optimizing the physical effort made in the movement, making the itinerary on foot, in the shortest possible time, applying the appropriate technique (you cannot run, you must keep at least one foot in contact with the ground at all times using the poles actively, without dragging them, performing the diagonal technique that consists of the support of each baton in action with the opposite foot), and with the maximum respect for the natural environment

Nordic Walking is a walking discipline among the disciplines recognized by the European Masters Athletics (EMA) and can be with mass-start, individual time trials and a relay, on circuits with homogeneous terrain that may foresee slight altimetric variations (no more than 6%). Nordic Walking competitions are governed by the following rules regarding equipment, race techniques, categories, courses and methods of conducting races, timing and ranking.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS

Rule 1- Race Technique

1. General principles

- a) While walking, running and / or suspension between the two supports is prohibited: one foot must always be in contact with the ground
- b) The contact of the foot with the ground must begin with the support of the heel and then make a roll that involves the entire plantar area and with the completion of the push on the forefoot.
- c) Only the alternating step is allowed.
- d) the rear leg must be extended before the foot makes contact with the ground

2. Use of NW poles

- a) The support of the pole on the ground must take place between the two feet of the athlete.
- b) The push on the stick should be evident, active and powerful; during the support phase the arm should extend and exert a gradual thrust that should end beyond the hip.
- c) The hand holding the stick must exert the thrust throughout the conducting phase. The push goes also maintained beyond the hip and in the opening phase of the hand, generating an empty space (light) between the hand and the pelvis.
- d) During the initial support phase of the pole on the ground and at the end of the push, the athlete's legs and arms might be slightly bent (in a natural way), as required by the Nordic Walking technique.
- e) It is not allowed to change the length of the sticks during the competition.

- f) The support on the ground of the pole should occur at the same time as the support on the ground of the heel of the foot front.
- g) The use of poles must be such as not to hinder the walk of other competitors

Rule 2 – Equipment – Clothing

In Nordic Walking competitions it is mandatory to use the following equipment:

1. Poles

- a) The poles should be equipped with a special Nordic Walking strap, able to maintain full pole control even during the eventual opening of the hand, as well as a handle, which, in conjunction with the strap, allows complete control and suspension of the pole, when the athlete extends his arm, posteriorly and completely with open hand and in a prone-supinated position.
- b) No other types than Nordic Walking Poles are allowed to use. The poles must guarantee all the safety and resistance characteristics.
- c) If an athlete owning not suitable poles as per typology, length or any other reason, the same can ask a spare poles supplied by the LOC.
- d) The length of the two poles must be identical. The stick correctly held and placed perpendicular to the ground in front of the athlete, it must allow the elbow to form an angle of 90 ° (ninety degrees), with a tolerance of more or less 10% (ten percent) of the pole length.
- e) When using the pads, the length of the poles must be within the parameters indicated in point d).
- f) The use of adjustable poles is allowed.
- g) Before the start, at the discretion of the Judges, the regularity of the poles heights may be checked. The same Judges, before the start, will be able to impose to the athlete an adjustment of the height of the poles in case they do not consider it correct.

2. Footwear

- a) Sports shoes with structural characteristics and sole grip suitable for the competition terrain are allowed.
- b) Spiked shoes with or without spikes are not allowed.
- c) Trekking or mountain shoes/boots are not recommended.

3. Bib

Competitors must wear the race bib provided by the LOC in a visible position on the chest and on the back, with the age category.

4. Clothing

The use of clothing should allow the Judges to adequately assess the competitor's technical and athletic gesture.

COMPETITION OFFICIALS

Rule 3 – Race Direction

The Race Director:

1. He is appointed by the EMA and LOC.
2. He is responsible for all services relating to the event.
3. Before the start, summons the Chief Judge to organize the Judges placement along the race course.
4. In collaboration with the Technical Delegate, he must ensure that the competition course is suitable and well marked, that the start and finish areas and rest areas have been set up as per these Regulations and are well reported.
5. Check with the awards responsables that everything has been properly set up.

Rule 4 – Technical Delegate

The Technical Delegate:

1. He is appointed by the EMA
2. He must ensure that the Competition Rules are respected by the athletes, technicians and coaches.
3. In collaboration with the Race Director he must ensure that the race course is suitable and well marked, that the start and finish areas, as the other technical areas (coaching, change, refreshment) have been set up as per these Regulations and are well reported
4. He must control and ensure the presence of medical service during the warm up and during the competition.

Rule 5 – Jury of Appeal

Responds to complaints in second instance, in accordance with the provisions of the WA and WMA rules.

Rule 6 – Chief Judge

1. The Chief Judge is appointed by the Race Director:
2. He checks that the Timekeepers have drawn up the race rankings.
3. He receives from the Judges the warnings and imposes disqualifications as foreseen by this Regulation.

4. He will stay during the competition at the finish line, in connection with the Judges on the course.
5. At the end of the race, he calls the Judges to draw up the Race Report.

Rule 7 – Nordic Walking Judges

Features:

1. The Nordic Walking Judges are competition Judges of the walking specialty selected and appointed by the National Athletics Federation who have acquired the specific qualification through a training course held by Federal Nordic Walking Technicians and who speak possibly two languages (English and Italian).
2. During the competition, they must check that the competitors respect the Nordic walking technique and comply with the current regulation.
3. In competitions the NW Judges must be positioned by the Chief Judge along the one-way course such a distance between one and the other, which allows them to always keep the competitors under control along the track.
4. A Judge, appointed by the Chief Judge, must be positioned near the coaching, change and rest areas for check the competitor's behavior at entry and exit.
5. The Judges must attend a briefing before the competition and attend the demonstration of the technique from part of the Chief Judge.
6. If a NW Judge detects an obvious discrepancy in the competition equipment, clothing or footwear, with respect to these Regulations, can stop the athlete for a check.
7. At the end of the competition the NW Judges will meet to draw up the minutes where the possible disqualifications and reminders with indicated reasons.
8. The NW Judges, by means of volunteers (using bicycles), must be in contact with the Chief Judge.
9. The competition Judges must be provided with a table on which penalties, warnings, disqualifications and any other annotation regarding the behavior of the competitors during the conduct of the race.
10. The Judges must have with them the card and paddle for reporting infringements (white and yellow card/paddle). The Chief Judge will have to be equipped with a red paddle or red card.

Decision Process:

The decisions of the Judges will be binding and unappealable, and no claim can be made in aspects related to the paddles shown to the participants!

THE COMPETITION

Rule 8 – Race Courses

1. General characteristics
 - a) The competitions must be organized on ring courses with homogeneous terrain that they can foresee slight altimetric variations not exceeding 6%; the paths must be wide enough to allow the overtaking between competitors.

- b) The surface of the paths can be asphalt, tartan or other synthetic material, dirt road, grazing grass or other natural substrate as long as it is smooth and compact. Courses with mixed terrain are allowed.
- c) The length of the lap, in relation to the race distance, should possibly be between 800 and 2000 meters
- d) EMA NW Manager will take care of the measurement of the course in cooperation with the LOC.

2. Preparation of the courses

- a) The courses must be carefully marked in particular at the starting and finish lines, crossroads and any other critical points, in order to avoid course errors by the athletes.
- b) The safety of the athletes must be guaranteed, with the safety of the course from the public, any vehicular traffic and without that blocks the course (stones, roots etc).
- c) The course must be equipped by service areas, called "coaching area" "changing area" and "supplying/rest area". Any typology of service area, must be clearly marked by coloured lines on the ground and vertical signals with the notice "start" and "end". Within service areas, the use of poles and alternated technique may be interrupted, without prejudice to the prohibition to run.

c1. Coaching area

Within coaching areas, technicians and coaches can provide technical assistance to athletes, (I.e. replacement of broken poles), or tactical and chronometric indications. No food and/or drinks can be supplied within coaching areas. An athlete who broke one or both poles, must continue to the nearest coaching area, while maintaining the alternated technique and the correct rolling of the step. In case of replacement of one or both poles, same length must be kept. Replacements with poles of different length will result into an immediate disqualification. Loss of one or both asphalt pads is not considered as a pole damage.

c2. Changing area

Asphalt pads can be mounted / removed within changing areas. It is not allowed to receive new poles within a changing area. Any asphalt pad lost during the track can also be replaced outside a changing area, but the athlete must completely stop during the replacement operations, position himself at the side of the track, without hindering other competitors. The athlete must also inform the nearest Race Judge about his will to stop for the change and obtain his consent.

c3. Supplying/Rest area

Within supplying areas, the athlete can take food and/or drinks, both owned or supplied by the organization. It is allowed, with the authorization of the Race Director, to use personal supplies (drinks, food, etc.); they must be marked with competitor's bib number and positioned within supplying areas. An employee, indicated by Race Director, will deliver it to the competitor. It is forbidden to receive any kind of refreshment along the track by coaches, technicians or public.

3. Length of the race courses for Masters (W/M 35+)

a) Individual competitions

- 5 Km
- 10 Km

b) Relays

- 4x 2 km
- 4x 4Km

Rule 9 – Conduct of the Competition

1. Pre race briefing

- before the start, Race Director and Chief Judge summons all team leaders, as well as competitors not represented by a team and Race Judges, to carry out a pre-race briefing. In the attendance list the participants have to sign in.
- pre-race briefing is held in the event official language; the LOC may use interpreters to communicate in different languages
- during the pre-race briefing, main rules are illustrated, with particular regard to:
 - a) admitted walking techniques (with practical demonstration by a judge);
 - b) use of service areas and their location on the course;
 - c) main infringements and related sanctions;
 - d) any criticality of the terrain (I.e. due to weather conditions) and related behaviour;
 - e) points of availability of medical assistance;
 - f) any exceptions to this regulation due to particular conditions (I.e. wiping sweat outside the service areas on particularly hot days);
 - g) any other information deemed useful for the correct race development.
- Competitors represented by their team leader can also participate to the pre-race briefing
- Team leaders may put any question from competitors represented, to the LOC
- The presence of team leaders implies acceptance of the regulation and the agreement of validity by all the competitors represented, even if not physically present.
- Failure to attend the pre-race briefing does not affect the starting possibility; however, no complaints will be accepted from competitors who did not attend, in person or by proxy, the briefing.

2. Start

- a) The athletes must be present at the starting grid at least ten minutes before the start.
- b) The start can take place in both mass-start and individual time trials. It can take place simultaneously for male and female categories.
- c) The start must be carried out using a suitable acoustic means.
- d) In mass-starts, the designated Judge must report when there are 5 minutes left before the start. In the individual time trials will have to mark the time remaining to the start at thirty, ten seconds from the start and with the count down of the last five seconds.

e) Only in the mass-start start and at the discretion of the Technical Delegate and the Race Director, the competitors will be allowed to proceed with the sticks raised for a length of up to 50 meters (suitably marked), for avoid accidents. It is however forbidden to run or take steps other than the alternating one.

3. Timekeeping - Classifications - Distribution of Regulations

a) The timing of the competition must be entrusted to official timekeepers, recognized by EMA or LOC.

b) It is desirable to use timing with transponder.

c) The rankings must be drawn up at the end of the race and displayed in the finish area.

d) These Regulations must be made available at the TIC or in the meeting area of the event in order to be consulted by technicians and participants

4. Complaints

Any complaint must be submitted verbally to the Chief Judge within thirty minutes of the publication of the results of the race. If it is rejected, a second instance complaint can be submitted in writing to the Appeal Judge by paying a deposit of euro 100 which will be returned only in case of reception of the same.

5. Minutes

a) At the end of the event, the Race Director has the task of drawing up the minutes of the race in electronic or paper format

b) The competition report must contain the date and place of the event, the type of event, the characteristics of the courses (length and height difference) and the name of the Race Director.

c) The Report drawn up by the Technical Delegate must contain a brief account of the event and the names of the Race Judges.

Rule 10 – Behavior in the Race

1. Each competitor must correctly perform only the alternate step and the correct roll in such a way as not to constitute an obstacle or danger for the opponents; the competitor in front has the right to choose the trajectory.

2. It is forbidden to walk too close to the preceding competitor except during the overtaking phase. The competitor about to be lapped must leave space to the fastest competitor.

3. It is forbidden to be followed along the route by accompanying persons or the public, either in vehicles or on foot. The race course is reserved for competitors only

4. Competitors cannot leave the path or make any deviations or cuts, under penalty of disqualification.

5. The competitor who during the competition should damage or break one or both poles must continue up to the coaching service area to provide for the replacement, maintaining the alternating pitch and the correct roll.

6. In the event of a broken pole change, the replaced poles must have the same length as the previous, under penalty of disqualification. The replaced poles must be kept by the coach and placed in disposition of the Judges.
7. During the competition it is allowed to stop to retrieve pads that were accidentally lost during the race.
8. Any form of refreshment outside the authorized areas is prohibited.
9. Persons are not allowed to approach and talk to the Judge during the course of the competition.

Rule 11 – Rights and Duties of the Competitor

1. Rights

a) With the payment of the registration fee, the competitor has the right to use all the services offered or provided by the organization for the event and to have guaranteed the assistance service in case of injury.

2. Duties

- a) In order to participate in the Nordic Walking competitions it is mandatory to be registered (licensed) to the National Federations and validated by the Team Approver
- c) By entering the Event, the athlete accepts these Regulations and undertakes to respect them, competing with fairness towards the Organization and competitors.
- d) The athlete must behave respectfully towards the Organizers, Race Judges, Timekeepers and the Race Director.
- e) The athlete relieves the organization of any responsibility for events that occurred before, during and after the race, unless are caused by the fault of the organizer of the event.
- f) The athlete waives the right of compensation against the organizers for events that occurred during the competition.
- g) The athlete has the responsibility of taking care of personal items and equipment; the organizer can not be in charge for lost items equipment.

SANCTIONS

Failure to comply with these Regulations provides for the following sanctions (the cards are cumulative):

1. Call with white card/paddle by the NW Judges on the course: no penalties
2. Warnings with yellow card/paddle reported with a red dot on the scoreboard by 3 different judges, if possible from two different countries
3. Disqualification after the 4th red dot by the Chief Judge with a red paddle.

Rule 12 – Call

The white card/paddle will be used by any NW Judge as the first signal of infringement and does not involve any penalty.

Causes:

1. Not executing the Nordic Walking technique correctly
2. Do not wear a visible bib.

Rule 13 – Warnings

The warning with yellow card/paddle will be used in the event of non-compliance with the walking technique and / or misconduct specified in these Regulations.

An athlete cannot receive more than one warning from the same judge.

Warnings will be promptly communicated to the Chief Judge and will be reported with a red dot on the scoreboard.

The following penalties will be applied with the warnings:

- a) First warning with red dot on the board: no penalty.
- b) Second and Third warning with red dot on the board: the competitor will be stopped by a Race Judge in a special pre-established area (**penalty zone**) before the arrival area and will have to stop for 15 seconds (5 Km), and 30 seconds (10 km) at the end of which the athlete will be able to return to the circuit and resume the race

It is not allowed to replace chronometric penalties with other kind of penalty (I.e. extension of the course on "penalty rings") in order to:

- a. make the impact of the penalty homogeneous among all athletes, avoiding that the penalty will be greater for a slower athlete, given the longer time to walk a penalty ring compared to a faster athlete;
- b. allow applied penalties to be removed from the total time, if the athlete submits a complaint and the same is accepted

If the second and third warning card is not delivered by the course assistants to the judges by the end of the race, the penalty time for the due stop in the pit line will be added to the final time based on the race distance.

Causes:

- Anticipating the starting signal
- Jump, Run, Slide
- Prevent being passed or obstruct the passage of other participants.
- Shorten the itinerary even if it is involuntary
- Fill the hydration elements outside the areas determined by the organization.
- Verbal attack to the referee
- Any fault made in the last kilometer that directly and affects evident to the struggle for position between two or more athletes, and this situation makes lose the technique.
- Failure to comply with the regulations regarding the mandatory use of rubber blocks (pads).

Rule 14 – Disqualifications

1. Technical disqualifications

The technical disqualification will be imposed by the Nordic Walking Chief Judge by showing the athlete a red card or red paddle and will be applied in the following cases:

- a) Upon receipt of the fourth warning, visible on the scoreboard, from four different Judges from, if possible, two different countries.
- b) For obvious non-compliance with the regulations on the finish straight even without the competitor having received in previously yellow cards.
- c) Replacement of the poles with others of different length.

If the fourth warning is not delivered by the assistants to the Chief Judge by the end of the race, the disqualification will still be assigned even after the finish.

2. Other warnings and disqualifications

The following warnings or disqualifications will be imposed by the Chief Judge at races applying the provisions of this regulation:

- a) Serious misconduct towards competitors or Judges.
- b) Deviations from the course
- c) Refreshments in unauthorized areas.
- d) Any other form of assistance received outside the rest areas.

The disqualified competitor must leave the course immediately and remove the bib number!

3. Miscellaneous

- a) The NW Judges on the course are required to promptly communicate to the Chief Judge the bib number of the warned athlete.
- b) The Chief Judge, on the recommendation of the EMA Safety Officer and the Competition Doctor, must exclude any competitor from the competition who might be in precarious physical condition. This decision is a final one.

4. Complaints

Any complaints must be submitted verbally to the Chief Judge within thirty minutes of the end of the competition or of the publication of the results of the race. If it is rejected, a second instance complaint can be submitted in writing to the Appeal Judge within next 30 minutes by paying a deposit of € 100,00 which will be returned only in case of reception.

The decisions of the Judges will be binding, and no claim can be made some in the aspects related to the cards shown to the participants.

Rule 15 - Awards – Age Categories

The categories admitted to participate to the European Championships are the following, divided by date of birth at the age group cut-off date, not by year of birth:

- W35 - M35
- W40 - M40
- W45 - M45
- W50 - M50
- W55 - M55

W60 - M60
W65 - M65
W70 - M70
W75 - M75
W80 - M80
W85 - M85
W90 - M90
W95 - M95
W100+-M100+

Under 35 athletes can participate to Open Races.

EMA President
EMA Vice-President Competition
EMA Technical Manager Nordic Walking