

Loss of contact: 2020, the Year of the COVID

Late in 2019, a hitherto unknown variety of the coronavirus family was identified in the animal markets of Wuhan, China. Its spread to humans was quick, and often devastating. Wuhan, and the province in which it is located, were quickly “locked down” (to use the phrase with which we all became familiar). The drastic measures there actually reduced and essentially eliminated the spread within a few months, albeit after a dreadful toll.

But the measures came too late. With its intriguing medical name, the “novel coronavirus” was transmitted out of Wuhan to other parts of China, and soon, with international travel so common now, across the world. The disease it causes (now famously named COVID-19) could often be mild and flu-like. But it could also easily be fatal. By year-end, over 15,000 deaths had been recorded in Canada; worldwide, the toll reached two million only a few days after the start of the new year, and will inevitably continue into 2021.

A major problem was the ease of transmission. Countries that reacted quickest and most firmly fared best. They could then focus on stamping out the occasional outbreak, without the need to protect an entire population.

Canada reacted firmly enough to prevent the situation going completely out of control. However, sooner would have been better. It was not until late March that international air arrivals were limited to four airports where testing could be done. Soon thereafter, international travel stopped almost completely, including across the land border with the United States, where the virus had free rein. By then, our country was in what became known as “the first wave”. The resulting lockdowns were clearly successful, but non-medical pressure caused restrictions to be loosened too early for any medical logic.

The experts could then only predict a “second wave” which duly crashed upon the country late in the year. We entered 2021 under severe restrictions again, with two hopes for the future: first, that the same mistake of “reopening” too soon will not be repeated, and second, that various vaccines, rushed through research, testing and clinical trials in an admirably short amount of time, will be both successful against the virus and free from adverse side effects.

“Lockdowns”, even when prematurely loosened, affected all of society. The social history will describe what we all experienced better than these few lines. But sport, especially community sport, was severely affected. From the Olympic Games in Tokyo (postponed for exactly one year, in a move that still may prove too optimistic) to local, provincial and national events, sport – like so many other aspects of our lives – came to an abrupt stop. While some professional sport continued in elaborate “bubbles” of spectatorless precautions, and valiant effort and creativity converted other events to “virtual” experiences, frankly little else happened.

For Race Walking, as the attached information shows, the months from March to December were marked by an almost total “loss of contact”.

A Note about the National Race Walk Rankings

This 2020 list marks the 30th year since the rankings were first produced. They have appeared annually since 1991, with the exception of 1999. The AC statisticians in the 1980s realized that they were not documenting race walking with the same care they brought to the other events. Since many race walks are held away from "mainstream" competitions, our results were often missed or inadequately reported.

The leading statisticians of that era, like Jurgen Wittenburg, Tom MacWilliam and the great Cecil Smith, strove to clearly and eloquently "tell the story of the sport in numbers". They reflected, and at times led, the standards of the Association of Track and Field Statisticians (ATFS), which started in 1950 and which still provides the IAAF (now WA - World Athletics) with its own "story in numbers".

They therefore asked for help from race walk specialists. The collaboration resulted in Canadian statistics of uncommonly high quality, published in Athletics Magazine and AC's own "stats annual" for a number of years. This is the reason for our present "reporting standards". All other events were published in lists that recorded the 25 best athletes. The reporting standards for race walking enabled us to reflect an equivalent level. Those standards have remained relatively consistent since.

Though the advent of "computerized everything" should make compilation easier (and, properly used, it does), there is no substitute for knowledgeable research and well-tested standards of quality. Without that care, the product can easily fail to faithfully record athletic performance. This may just be inaccurate observation and reporting. But more seriously, it can be because generic programs – or those who operate them - often prioritize technical convenience or flamboyance over the elegant simplicity of the sport's rules and practices. Proper results relive the performances as the athletes first lived them. Recording their collective experiences is our privilege, our small contribution to our sport's history. Let us not just push buttons and assume our work is done; let us do the work before we push the buttons! In so doing, we continue the teaching, the heritage, of the Smiths, the MacWilliams, the Wittenburgs and their like, that these rankings attempt to honour.

Roger Burrows, Bytown Walkers Club de marche, Ottawa, January 2021

Legend

- (r) - road race
- (t) - outdoor track race
- (i) - indoor track race
- @ - intermediate time provided in the official results, en route to a longer distance (completed)
- # - intermediate time provided in the official results, en route to a longer distance (not completed)
- & - noteworthy performance between points that do not include the start, if the performance can be exactly calculated from information provided in the official results
(Times marked # and & are normally listed in "other noteworthy performances" after the main list)
- (A) - elevation higher than 1000m (the WA designation for an "altitude" venue)
- m - result in mixed race. The first number indicates placing within gender, the second number indicates overall placing. One number only indicates that no athletes of the other gender were ahead. (ie 1/4m = gender winner, fourth overall; 1m = overall winner)
- *, **, +, ++, ! - special circumstances explained in notes below each list
- ?, ?? - information insufficient, or to be confirmed. May be placed in "other noteworthy performances" until clarified
- sec - found in an authoritative, but secondary, source. Confirmation (with official results) welcome

National Race Walk Rankings 2020

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First draft: January 03, 2021; second and final draft: January 21, 2021. Any further updates will be archived but not published, unless they significantly affect these Rankings)

Women

3km

Reporting Standard 17:00

All track performances unless marked (r)

1)	15:00.30(i)	ST-AMAND, Anne	01	QC-CAUL	1	QCCh	Montréal (C-R)	Feb 15
2)	15:47.41(i)	McCARTHY, Audrey	02	ON-PL	1	ONCh	Toronto (York)	Feb 08
	16:24.87(i)	McCarthy			1	ONJr	Toronto (York)	Mar 01
3)	16:25.57(i)	MEADE, Ora	02	ON-PL	2	ONJr	Toronto (York)	Mar 01
4)	16:26.24(i)	MICHOUX, Évane	83	QC-VAINQ	2	QCCh	Montréal (C-R)	Feb 15
5)	16:29.13(i)	JEAN, Élisabeth	00	QC-VAINQ	3	QCCh	Montréal (C-R)	Feb 15
6)	16:42.05(i)	GAUTHIER, Adèle	04	QC-MPB	4	QCCh	Montréal (C-R)	Feb 15
	16:56.18(i)	Michoux			1 (3m?)	Relais	Vaudreuil-Dorion	Jan 18

5km

Reporting Standard: 30:00

All road performances unless marked (t) or (i)

1)	23:51	SEAMAN, Rachel	86	ON-	@	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25
2)	26:28	RAMAGE, Katelynn	93	BC-	@	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25
3)	26:55	FOX, Audrey*	00	BC-UBC	@	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25
4)	26:57	LU, Joann	00	BC-RWW	@	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25

* Resident foreigner (student visa) - USA

Other noteworthy performances

“Avec Jobin, ça marche”, Saint-Boniface, September 25

A 5km race walk (r) held, for the second time, as part of the long-standing “Demi-Marathon Marcel Jobin” program. Unusually in this unusual year, the event was sanctioned, judged, and actual walkers took part! The field was an admirable 23 in total, including a number of stars from the present and the past. COVID conditions required “physical distancing” in the sense that the race was conducted in “time trial” format, with small groups starting at intervals. Properly documented, that’s fine. However, some of the published results raise questions; as such, pending clarification, they are included here as “noteworthy”. Times marked (?) are from the “chip time” column, which normally would not be official. But in this case, the “chip time” list seems more solid; the “official time” column is clearly in error. The results also list finish positions by “chip time”: the notation (!) below shows positions adjusted to reflect what appears to be the actual order of finish.

25:44?	St-Amand, Anne	01	QC-CAUL	1/4m (!)
26:19?	Drapeau, Rosalie	03	QC-CAU	2/6m
29:38	Flipsen, Johanna	55	AB-HRT	3/8m

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10 km

Reporting standard: 61:00

All road performances unless marked (t) or (i)

1)	47:41	SEAMAN, Rachel	86	ON-	@	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25
2)	53:28	RAMAGE, Katelynn	93	BC-	@	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25
3)	53:41	LU, Joean	00	BC-RWW	@	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25
4)	54:14	FOX, Audrey*	00	BC-UBC	@	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25

* Resident foreigner (student visa) - USA

20km

Reporting standard: 2h10:00

All road performances unless marked

1)	1h36:26	SEAMAN, Rachel	86	ON-	1/2m	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25
2)	1h48:29	RAMAGE, Katelynn	93	BC-	5/6m	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25
3)	1h49:18	LU, Joean	00	BC-RWW	7/8m	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25
4)	1h51:57	FOX, Audrey*	00	BC-UBC	8/9m	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25

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50km

No performances reported

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Men

3km

Reporting Standard 16:00

All track performances unless marked (r)

1)	14:12.73(i)	BABENKO, Dmitry	73	BC-	1	BCMast	Kamloops	Mar 01
2)	14:20.92(i)	CÔTÉ, Alexis	03	QC-CAUL	1	QCCh	Montréal (C-R)	Feb 16
3)	15:27.01(i)	XU, Jianping	65	ON-DUN	2m	OnMast	Toronto (York)	Mar 08
	15:33.16	Xu			@	FFFest	Hamilton	Sep 20
4)	15:50.72(i)	BÉCHARD, Yvan	62	QC-VAIQ	1(m?)	Relais	Vaudreuil-Dorion	Jan 18

5km

Reporting standard: 28:00

All road performances unless marked (t) or (i)

1)	23:33	BILODEAU, Mathieu	83	BC-RWW	@	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25
2)	24:17	SOLIVEN, Daniel	01	BC-RWW	@	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25
3)	26:13.34	XU, Jianping	65	ON-DUN	1	FFFest	Hamilton	Sep 20
4)	26:24.39(i)	BÉCHARD, Yvan	62	QC-VAIQ	1	QCCh	Montréal (C-R)	Feb 15
	26:37.07(i)	Xu			1	ONCh	Toronto (York)	Feb 09

Other noteworthy performances

“Avec Jobin, ça marche”, Saint-Boniface, September 25

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20:25	Bilodeau, Mathieu	83	BC-RWW	1m
24:55	Henry, Alexandre	79	QC-	2m
25:37	Paine, Noel		ON-	3m (!)
26:03	Ruest, Jocelyn	80	QC-VAIQ	4/5m(!)
27:54	Laflamme, Denis	54	QC-VAIQ	5/7m

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10km

Reporting standard: 59:00

All road performances unless marked (t) or (i)

1)	39:50.5(t)	DUNFEE, Evan	90	BC-RWW	3	Supernova 2	Melbourne, AUS	Jan 27
	40:09.3(t)	Dunfee			2	Supernova 1	Melbourne, AUS	Jan 12
2)	46:27	BILODEAU, Mathieu	83	BC-RWW	@	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25
3)	49:36	SOLIVEN, Daniel	01	BC-RWW	2	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25

20km

Reporting Standard: 2h00:00

All road performances unless marked (t)

1)	1h22:32	DUNFEE, Evan	90	BC-RWW	2	Aus20	Adelaide, AUS	Feb 09
2)	1h32:38	BILODEAU, Mathieu	83	BC-RWW	@	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25

50km

1)	4h03:52	BILODEAU, Mathieu	83	BC-RWW	1m	US50	Santee, CA	Jan 25

Mathieu's splits after 20km

1h55:42 (25km); 2h19:20 (30km); 3h10:22 (40km)