

Avoiding the Dairy Queen Club

From the April '98 Port City Pacers PaceLeter

As a few athletes found out at the ATR, racewalking is in the eye of the beholder--and the beholder is the racewalk judge. On a typical course there are between four and nine judges enforcing the rules of the sport: Walkers must keep one foot on the ground at all times; and they must keep their knees straight from the point where the heel touches the ground in front of the body, until the leg is in the vertical position under the body. Some racewalkers have great technique and never receive warnings from the judges; some walkers always look bad; while others are "borderline."

The judge's job is a difficult one--especially when it comes to these "borderline" walkers. Enforcing the rules can be a bit like enforcing sexual harassment laws: Each judge must decide where to draw the line. Was that knee absolutely straight on contact? Was Bill Clinton straight with the public? Nevermind about that but if he did what he's accused of doing, clearly Bill needs to work on his technique. Similarly, if you sometimes have trouble getting through races, you probably need to work on your technique.

It's quite natural to initially blame your accusers (the judges) when the red cards start flying. In the president's case, okay, maybe Paula Jones has an ax to grind, but racewalk judges really don't have anything to gain by throwing you out of a race. In the end you're the one who's going to have to make some changes if you want to succeed--because it's doubtful that the judges will suddenly change the way they feel about your technique before the next race. (And here's another helpful hint: yelling at a judge during or after a race is probably not the best way to get that judge "on your side" for that next 5K).

So what do you do if you were "tossed" at the ATR or another judged racewalk?

- 1. Talk to the judges after the race.** They really are there to help you, so take advantage of them. Ask them what they saw and what you can do to "pass the muster" next time. They may be able to give you some pointers that will help you to walk more legally (and efficiently) the next time. (It's FREE coaching!)
- 2. Talk to the judges!** Yes, I just said that, but it's important! Sure, the judges can help you with your technique, but equally important, by showing that you're trying to improve your technique, they may be a bit more lenient next time if you truly are "borderline" rather than completely illegal.
- 3. Come out to Mo and Dave's Wednesday Night Daredevil Racewalk School.** Free of charge, and a great precursor to Margarita Night at Los Arcos! ATR racewalk course record-holder Monetta Roberts is there just about every week, and the only time I'm not there is when I'm traveling around North America charging racewalkers an arm and a leg for what you're getting for free! So show up, wouldja!?!?

[*Return to homepage](#)
