

Predicting race times for Race Walkers by Julian Hopkins (Former National Event Coach)

How does your personal best time for 10 km compare with your best time for 20 km? This might seem a trivial question but I think it is very useful to be able to relate performances at one distance to performances at another for several reasons. Firstly, a simple comparison of your times at different distances with the predicted times will indicate over which distance you are relatively weak. Secondly, if short distance times allow long distance times to be fairly accurately predicted, you can set yourself realistic targets for the longer distances. I don't think that I need to emphasise the advantages to be gained from walking at a level pace - they have been spelled out by physiologists and coaches often enough as well as being demonstrated by the world's best in recent years. As a result of looking at this problem, I have produced the following rules of thumb for predicting times at longer distances.

1) To predict a 10 km time from your 5 km best, double your time for 5 km, and add one minute. For example, if you are a 23:00 performer, you should be capable of 47:00 for 10 km. Consequently you should aim to reach 5 km in about 23:30. If you cannot achieve 47:00 then you need to improve your specific endurance. The correlation between a 5km and a 10 km performance can also be used in reverse e.g. if you have a personal best of 23:15 for 5 km and manage to record 47:00 for twice the distance, this would indicate a need to improve your basic speed giving you greater potential at longer distances.

2) To predict a 20 km time from your 10 km best performance, double your time for 10 km. and add three minutes. So if you have achieved a 47:00 10 km. you will now be aiming for 97:00 at 20 km with a half-way time close to 48:30.

3) To predict a 50 km time from a 30 km performance, first find three quarters of your best 30 km time. Then add the result to your original 30 km. time to give you your predicted 50 km time. For example, if you have walked 30 km in 2h 30m (about 2h 41m for 20 miles) you should be capable of about 4h 22m - 4h 23m with the correct preparation. Your even pace schedule will require about 2h 37m - 2h 38m at the 30 km point.

I should emphasise that these rules are only rough guides to possible performances. Although you can no doubt think of exceptions to the rules amongst even the best walkers, it should be remembered that even they do not always achieve their potential at various distances due to incorrect training or not having ideal conditions when in their best form. Generally speaking, the rules seem to hold up very well.

5 km PB	10km predicted performance	20km predicted performance
19:30	40:00	83:00
19:45	40:30	84:00
20:00	41:00	85:00
20:15	41:30	86:00
20:30	42:00	87:00
20:45	42:30	88:00
21:00	43:00	89:00
21:15	43:30	90:00
21:30	44:00	91:00
21:45	44:30	92:00
22:00	45:00	93:00
22:15	45:30	94:00
22:30	46:00	95:00

22:45	46:30	96:00
23:00	47:00	97:00
23:15	47:30	98:00
23:30	48:00	99:00
23:45	48:30	100:00
24:00	49:00	101:00
24:15	49:30	102:00
24:30	50:00	103:00
24:45	50:30	104:00
25:00	51:00	105:00
25:15	51:30	106:00
25:30	52:00	107:00
25:45	52:30	108:00
26:00	53:00	109:00

NB. If you do not have a personal best at 5 km you can estimate what your best performance would be by adding 5 seconds per kilometre to your best pace over 3 km.

30 km PB	50 km predicted performance	30 km time for even pace 50 km
2h 10m	3h 47m 30s	2h 16m 30s
2h 12m	3h 51m	2h 19m
2h 14m	3h 54m 30s	2h 21m
2h 16m (2h 26m)	3h 58m	2h 23m
2h 18m	4h 1m 30s	2h 25m
2h 20m	4h 5m	2h 27m
2h 22m	4h 8m 30s	2h 29m
2h 24m	4h 12m	2h 31m
2h 26m	4h 15m 30s	2h 33m 30s
2h 28m	4h 19m	2h 35m 30s
2h 30m (2h 41m)	4h 22m 30s	2h 37m 30s
2h 32m	4h 26m	2h 40m
2h 34m	4h 29m 30s	2h 42m
2h 36m	4h 33m	2h 44m
2h 38m	4h 36m 30s	2h 46m
2h 40m	4h 40m	2h 48m
2h 42m	4h 43m 30s	2h 50m
2h 44m (2h 56m)	4h 47m	2h 52m
2h 46m	4h 50m 30s	2h 54m
2h 48m	4h 54m	2h 56m 30s
2h 50m	4h 57m 30s	2h 58m 30s

N.B. Several 20 mile equivalent times are shown in brackets as a guide.