48 HOUR ALL-TIME PONDERINGS PART 1

Can AI Create a 48 Hour All-Time Ranking List?

If you have ever wondered how much of the world's data has been captured by AI, wonder no more. It's all been sifted and stored in AI's many huge datasets, and the data stored therein includes all of our ultra distance walking stats. Consequently, it is now possible to query tools like ChatGPT and get all-time lists.

Of course, they are not always accurate, given that it's not always obvious if an athlete is walking or running in the event in question. But it's pretty good. Joffrid Mackett was interested in how Sharon Scholz's 48 Hour split (269.749 km) would compare with other 48 Hour performances so he asked ChatGPT to produce an All-Time ranking list for the 48 Hour Walk. He forwarded the resulting table to me and I was impressed, so I decided to try it for myself, and put following query into ChatGPT last week

Produce an all time list of the top 20 walkers for the 48 hour ultradistance walk. Put into a table. Order by Rank, Distance (km), Walker, Sex, Country, Year, Event / Venue, Performance type, Surface, Walking classification, Verification status, Primary source, Source URL, Notes.

AI's attempt to produce the 48H top 20 all-time list has Sandra Brown on top with 327.527km (Surgeres, 2007), just ahead of Annie van der Meer (Paris-Colmar 1983), followed by John Dowling (Nottingham 1983)

Rank	Dist (km)	Walker	Sex	Country	Year	Event / Venue	Performance type	Surface	Walking classification
1	327.527	Sandra Brown	F	Great Britain	2007	48 Heures Pédestres de Surgères, France	48-hour walk	Circuit	Dedicated pedestrian/walking event
2	327.500	Annie van der Meer	F	Netherlands	1983	Paris–Colmar, France	48-hour split	Road	Ultradistance walking
3	319.609	John Dowling	M	Ireland	1983	Nottingham, England	48-hour race-walk	Track	Formal multiday racewalking
4	304.164	Daniel Duboscq	M	France	2016	48 Heures de Royan, France	48-hour walk	Road	Dedicated walking division
5	294.973	Joffrid Mackett	M	Australia	2023	Australian 48H Championship, AIS Canberra	48-hour walk	Track	Dedicated walking performance
6	294.114	Ann Sayer	F	England	1982	Nottingham, England	48-hour race-walk	Track	Formal multiday racewalking
7	292.849	Yves-Michel Kerlau	M	France	2025	48 Heures de Royan, France	48-hour walk	Road	Dedicated walking division
8	286.128	Dominique Delange	M	France	2017	48 Heures de Royan, France	48-hour walk	Road	Dedicated walking division
9	283.500	Barry Loveday	M	Australia	2012	Australian 48H Championship, Caboolture	48-hour walk	Track	Dedicated walking performance
10	282.514	Alain Grassi	M	France	2015	48 Heures de Royan, France	48-hour walk	Road	Dedicated walking division
11	281.748	Christine David	F	France	2025	48 Heures de Royan, France	48-hour walk	Road	Dedicated walking division
12	280.203	Peter Bennett	M	Australia	2010	Australian 48H Championship, Caboolture	48-hour walk	Track	Dedicated walking performance
13	278.466	Richard McChesney	M	New Zealand	2018	48h Royan – Marche, France	48-hour walk	Road	Dedicated walking event
14	275.957	Sabina Hamaty	F	Australia	2025	Sri Chinmoy 48H, Canberra	48-hour walk	Track	Dedicated walking performance
15	275.673	David Billett	M	Australia	2019	Australian 48H Championship, AIS Canberra	48-hour walk	Track	Dedicated walking performance
16	270.086	Allicia Heron	F	Australia	2024	Australian 48H Championship, Adelaide	48-hour walk	Track	Dedicated walking performance
17	257.877	Deryck Skinner	M	Australia	2006	Australian 48H Championship, Runaway Bay	48-hour walk	Track	Dedicated walking performance
18	240.033	Andrew Ludwig	M	Australia	2008	Australian 48H Championship, Caboolture	48-hour walk	Track	Dedicated walking performance
19=	236.703	Linda Christison	F	Australia	2017	Australian 48H Championship, AIS Canberra	48-hour walk	Track	Dedicated walking performance
19=	236.703	Heather Christison	F	Australia	2017	Australian 48H Championship, AIS Canberra	48-hour walk	Track	Dedicated walking performance

It took ChatGPT a little over 30 seconds to produce this table, along with its own explanatory text. Try it for yourself. Point your browser to https://chatgpt.com, copy the above query into the query box and press the ENTER key.

Now you have to review the findings and decide what is true and what has been misreported. I did just that with Sandra Brown who confirmed that her Surgeres race result was done as a runner. So we delete that table entry and consider the next entry, that of Annie van der Meer (327.500km). Was that legitimate? Did she really walk 327.500 km during he first 48 Hours of in the 1983 Paris-Colmar event. I checked with Emmanuel Tardi who confirmed that she actually did. Here is Emmanuel's analysis, showing the time for each checkpoint, starting from kilometre zero at 6:30PM on Day 1.

City	km	time	position
Vincennes	0.0	6:30PM	-
Lagny	23.5	9PM	23
Meaux	43.0	11:24PM	22
La ferté sous jouarre	63.5	2:02AM	22
Charly	79.0	3:57AM	22
Château-Thierry	94.0	5:52AM	22
Trelou	116.0	8:35AM	19
Epernay	145.0	12:46PM	18
Condé sur Marne	162.5	3:09PM	16
Chalons sur Marne	180.0	5:33PM	16
Togny aux boeufs	196.0	8:04PM	15
Vitry le françois	215.5	10:57PM	13
Larzicourt	231.0	1:06AM	14
Saint Dizier (official stop)	255.5	arrive 4:26AM start at 7:48AM	14

Bar le duc	279.5	11:23AM	15
Ligny en Barrois	295.5	1:36PM	14
Gondrecourt	**324.5**	**6:02PM**	**15**
Domremy	341.5	8:36PM	12
Neufchateau	351.5	10:19PM	12
Chatenois	366.5	0:41AM	12
Mirecourt	391.5	4:55AM	10
Dompaire	405.5	7:06AM	11
Epinal (official stop)	424.5	arrive 9:59AM start at 11:20AM	11
Chenimenil	438.5	1:42PM	11
Le Tholy	454.5	4:17PM	11
Gerardmer	464.5	5:56PM	11
Col de la Schlucht	480.5	8:26PM	11
Munster	498.0	0:22AM	10
Colmar	518.5	4:10AM	10

Yes, those splits show she was 324.5 km down the road (at Gondrecourt) at around the 6:02PM mark, just under 2 days later. She obviously arranged for a 48H split to be taken, hence her quoted ranking distance of 327.500km.

I think all the entries further down are verifiable walk performances so do we now have an All-Time Ranking List?

Rank	Dist (km)	Walker	Sex	Country	Year	Event / Venue	Performance type	Surface	Walking classification
1	327.500	Annie van der Meer	F	Netherlands	1983	Paris–Colmar, France	48-hour split	Road	Ultradistance walking
2	319.609	John Dowling	M	Ireland	1983	Nottingham, England	48-hour race-walk	Track	Formal multiday racewalking
3	304.164	Daniel Duboscq	M	France	2016	48 Heures de Royan, France	48-hour walk	Road	Dedicated walking division
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I'm afraid not. Consider that Annie was in 15th spot at Gondercourt. That means there would have been 14 walkers ahead of her at that time, all with hence with potentially greater 48H times. And there would be other great 48H splits in Paris-Colmar races in other years. Here is what Emmanuel had to say, once he did some further research.

> *It would be a very big job to extract approximate 48 Hour walk splits for all the Paris-Colmar walkers. For instance, in the 1999 Paris-Colmar, the start was at 8PM on Day 1.* ***Zbigniew Klapa*** *arrived in Dompaire (396.5km) at 7:15PM and in Epinal (415km) at 9:34PM. His 48 Hour split would have been in excess of 400km. In my opinion, due to excellent weather conditions, it is the best 48 Hour walk distance for the men. In the same race,* ***Gregor-Adam Urbanowski****,* ***Alexsei Rodionov*** *and* ***Alexander Roditchev*** *were not far behind and would also have had huge 48 Hour splits.*
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> |---|---|---|---|---|
> | *Zbigniew Klapa* | *Dompaire (396.5km)* | *7:15PM* | *Epinal (415km)* | *9:34PM* |
> | *Gregor-Adam Urbanowski* | | *7:23PM* | | *9:41PM* |
> | *Alexsei Rodionov* | | *9:45PM* | | *0:18AM* |
> | *Alexander Roditchev* | | *10:51PM* | | *1:34AM* |
>
> *For the women,* ***Kora Boufflert*** *walked 333km in 48h02 in 1995,* ***Isabelle Duchene*** *walked 334km in 45h59 in 1993 and* ***Isabelle Duchene*** *walked 331.5km in 44h58 in 1996.*

So, as things now stand, it is impossible to get any sort of real 48H all-time ranking list. The one that AI has generated marks a remarkable advance in AI capability but it is by no means comprehensive.

For the record, here is my brief report of that 1999 Paris Colmar event, as taken from the Aug 1999 Cent newsletter

PARIS TO COLMAR, 3-6 JUNE, 1999

From a non competitive event in America to the biggest ultra-distance walk in the world. Thanks to Roger LeMoine for chasing up the results of this year's Paris to Colmar for me. We looked all over the internet to no avail but Roger eventually tracked them down courtesy of Colin Young. As usual, the two great Polish walkers Klapa and Urbanowski dominated the event that they have made their own. On this occasion, Klapa was the winner, completing 521km in just under 59 hours. He broke his old record by some 3 hours. His average speed worked out to be 5 ½ mph. That means that he did each 100 mile split in under 19 hours and strung 3 of them together. Just mind boggling.

Men (521 km)

1.	Zbigniew Klapa	POL	58hrs 53mins
2.	Gregor-Adam Urbanowski	POL	61hrs 15mins
3.	Alexsei Rodionov	RUS	63hrs 06mins

The ladies race was also very competitive. Once again, Delcina Pajoul was successful (she won last year also). The first 3 women all walked the full 343km distance in less than 48 hours.

Ladies (343km)

1.	Delcina Pajoul	FRA	45hrs 53mins
2.	Ludmila Amirova	RUS	46hrs 37mins
3.	Irina Putintseva	RUS	46hrs 39mins

Tim Erickson
Friday 25th Sept 2026