

GLOVER SHIELD 10,000M WALK, PETERSHAM OVAL, SYDNEY, 15 AUGUST 1939

The 1940 Olympics had been awarded to Tokyo but, when Japan and China went to war in 1938, the city withdrew as host. Then began an incredible period in which the IOC became the ostrich of the sports world and refused to believe what it was seeing. Feeling it should stay out of world politics, it moved the Games to Helsinki, Finland. Even when the Russians invaded Finland, the IOC still continued with their planning. It was not until the Finnish Olympic Committee formally withdrew as host in April 1940 that the IOC finally shelved plans for any Games that year. In the midst of this shuffling, the IOC awarded the 1944 Games to London. With World War Two still raging, these Games were also eventually called off.

It was during this period of uncertainty that Australian walkers challenged for selection in the 1940 Olympic walks - a 10,000m track walk and a 50 km roadwalk. Victoria and NSW were the two walking powerhouses of the period and they were expected to fight out the official Australian Olympic 10,000m trial, to be held on August 15th 1939 in Sydney.

The Victorians were led by George Knott and Alan Reid. They had fought out the various Victorian titles for the past couple of years with Knott faster over the shorter distances and Reid stronger over the longer distances. The final Victorian championship before the trial was the Victorian 5 Mile walk championship at the Royal Melbourne Showground track. There Knott and Reid walked side by side throughout the event with the win going to Knott whose time of 37:15.0 saw him 0.4 secs ahead of Reid. Victorian hopes were high for their two star walkers.

The main NSW hope was Athol Stubbs, holder of the world 1 mile walk record (6:18.2), and the holder of all NSW State titles from 1 Mile to 10 Miles.

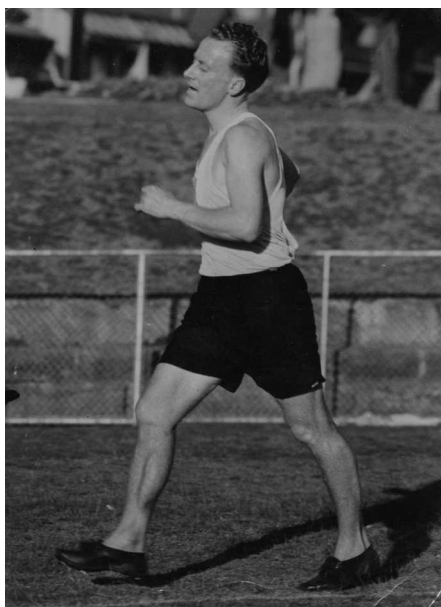
The 1939 Olympic trial was held in conjunction with the Glover Shield, a regularly scheduled interstate walking match. On this occasion, it was changed from 7 Miles to 10,000m and was contested on the Petersham Oval in Sydney. And what a race it was with Stubbs and Knott both breaking the Australian 10,000m record. The newspapers of the time recorded the race as follows:

Stubbs moved off in front of the Victorians Knott and Reid, followed by Stephenson and Gosling. At the end of the first mile, Stubbs' time was 7 minutes and he had already overlapped some of the other competitors. By 3 miles, covered in 21m 45s, he had increased the margin to over a minute, with Knott and Reid together at 22m 54s. Knott then moved away from Reid and by the 4 mile mark, had reduced the lead to 35 secs with Reid 11 secs further back.

Knott was closing the gap between Stubbs and, at 5 miles, had reduced the margin to 12 secs. Stubbs' time was 37m 6s. Reid in third place was 38 secs behind Knott. To 6 miles, Stubbs led in 44m 34s and Knott was then 3 secs behind and 1m 10s in advance of Reid. Stubbs finished 5 secs ahead of Knott and Reid was 26 secs behind in third place.

Stubbs' final time of 46m 1s broke George Parker's Australian record of 46m 32s. Knott also broke the record.

It is fair to say that both walkers would have been selected in the Australian team if the 1940 Olympics had gone ahead.



Athol Stubbs, Alan Reid and George Knott – top Australian walkers of the late 1930's

George Knott had age on his side and was able to make the Australian team for the 1948 Olympics, contesting the 10,000m walk in London. Athol Stubbs was not so lucky – this was his one big chance and the World War put paid to it. As this event illustrated, he was the dominant Australian track walker in the late 1930's. He twice created World Best Track performances for 1 mile (6:18.2 in Sydney on 25 February 1939 and 6:15.4 in Sydney on 17 February 1940) and was the reigning Australian 1 mile track, 3 mile track and 10,000m road champion at the outbreak of war. When championships were finally restarted in 1947, he resumed his walking career but, although he remained competitive on the national arena until the early 1950s, he never fully regained his pre-war form.

For the record, the results were

1.	A. J. Stubbs	NSW	46:01
2.	G. Knott	VIC	46:06
3.	A. Reid	VIC	47:22
4.	K. McClusky	VIC	49:22
5.	A. Stephenson	NSW	50:00
6.	A. Philpotts	VIC	50:09
7.	G. Gosling	NSW	50:31
8.	S. Sheedy	NSW	50:39
9.	J. Cummings	VIC	50:47
10.	J. McDougall	VIC	51:03

And now onto the newspaper cuttings. The first is a two page spread that focuses on winner Athol Stubbs



And the second is a great cartoon published in the Sydney paper the next day

