

## AUSTRALIAN RACEWALKING CHAMPIONSHPS MEN: 1997 - 2000

This follows on from my previous articles which detail the early Australasian and Australian Racewalking Championships (along with other particularly significant races), up to and including 1996.

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Our story continues from 1997.

The first item of note was the announcement by Kerry Saxby-Junna that she and husband Ray were expecting their first child in July 1997. That meant we would not see her in action during 1997, but she did have plenty of time to recover and prepare to defend her Commonwealth Games title in Malaysia in September 1998.

### 1997 Australian Roadwalk Championships and IAAF Race Walking World Cup Trials Middle Park, Melbourne, Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February 1997

The World Cup 50km trial had been held in December 1996, with the first 5 places going to Dominic McGrath, Michael Harvey, Shane Pearson, Mark Thomas and Ian Waters. Now it was the turn of the male 20km and female 10km walkers. Their trials would be held as part of the Australian T&F Championships in Melbourne in late February

Olympic fourth place finisher **Nick A'Hern** was untroubled in taking gold with 1:21:22, ahead of **Dion Russell**, **Duane Cousins** and **Brent Vallance**. Victorian **Ian Waters** was next in with 1:27:20 but it was then announced he had been disqualified. He had finished 5<sup>th</sup> in the 50km trial so was probably now going to miss out in both events.

#### Australian 20km Championship, Melbourne, Thur 27<sup>th</sup> Feb

1.	Nick A'Hern	NSW	1:21:22
2.	Dion Russell	VIC	1:23:16
3.	Duane Cousins	VIC	1:25:17
4.	Brent Vallance	NSW	1:26:14
5.	Paul Copeland	VIC	1:27:26
6.	Mark Donahoo	VIC	1:27:32
7.	Dominic McGrath	VIC	1:27:39
8.	Shane Pearson	QLD	1:28:29
9.	Luke Adams	NSW	1:28:50
10.	Travis Harbour	VIC	1:29:40
11.	Mark Thomas	VIC	1:30:36
12.	Duncan Knox	VIC	1:38:xx
-	Ian Waters	VIC	DQ

With Kerry Saxby-Junna out of action and with Anne Manning still injured (she had not competed for 6 months), there were places on offer for the women. **Jane Saville** won her second Australian 10km walk title with a huge PB of 42:59 to defeat her younger sister **Natalie Saville** (45:10) and **Jill Maybir-Barrett** (45:18). The first 5 girls all looked likely to be selected for the World Cup and that is what happened.

<b>Australian 10km Championship, Melbourne, Thur 27<sup>th</sup> Feb</b>			
1.	Jane Saville	NSW	42:59
2.	Natalie Saville	NSW	45:10
3.	Jill Maybir-Barrett	QLD	45:18
4.	Simone Wolowiec	VIC	45:50
5.	Wendy Muldoon	VIC	46:18
6.	Linda Coffee	NSW	47:10
7.	Terese Letherby	QLD	47:25
8.	Tracy Rosengrave	VIC	48:14
9.	Jenny Crooks	SA	48:26
10.	Sharon Schnyder	VIC	49:18
11.	Carolyn Vanstan	VIC	49:40
12.	Alanna Rogers	NZL	50:22
13.	Justi Tonti-Filippini	VIC	51:33
14.	Sara Cattermole	WA	52:19

**Australian Track & Field Championships - 1996-97**  
**Olympic Park, Melbourne, Victoria 27 February - 2 March 1997**

Three days later the walkers were back in action in the Australian T&F Championships 5000m walk. **Nick A'Hern** defended his title (his 6<sup>th</sup> win from the last 7 years), ahead of **Scott Nelson** and **Brent Vallance**.

<b>5,000m Track Walk Men, Melbourne, Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1997</b>				
1	Nick A'Hern	1969	NSW	19:24.31
2	Scott Nelson	1969	NZL	20:13.84
3	Brent Vallance	1972	NSW	20:25.87
4	Damien O'Mara	1975	NSW	20:37.17
5	Duane Cousins	1973	VIC	20:48.77
6	Noel Wooler	1975	QLD	21:05.75
7	Travis Harbour	1975	VIC	21:33.79
8	Paul Kennedy	1957	VIC	21:38.67
9	Shane Pearson	1972	QLD	21:48.01
10	Duncan Knox	1959	VIC	22:33.34
11	Christian Bone	1977	WA	23:31.72
12	Peter Blood	1967	VIC	23:35.02
-	Luke Adams	1976	NSW	DNF
-	Troy Sundstrom	1981	NSW	DQ
-	Mark Blackwood	1977	VIC	DQ

It was at this time that former East German walker **Ronald Weigel** was announced as the new AIS walks coach, taking over from Craig Hilliard who was now moving into a more senior role within the AIS coaching structure in Canberra. Weigel had wonderful credentials, with dual Olympic silver medals and both gold and silver at World Championship level.

Initially his stable included Nick A'Hern, Kerry Saxby-Junna, Dion Russell, Duane Cousins and Jane Saville. He would soon add Brent Vallance and Nathan Deakes to the fold. The next few years would see a huge improvement in the young AIS walkers under his mantle.

**18<sup>th</sup> IAAF Race Walking World Cup**  
**Podebrady, Czech Republic, 19-20 April 1997**

The 1997 IAAF Race Walking World Cup, held in Podebrady, Czech Republic, was the usual huge racewalking festival, with 140 in the mens 20km, 108 in the men's 50km and 117 in the women's 10km.

Last year's surprise winner of the Olympic 20km walk, **Jefferson Pérez**, confirmed he was no one-shot-wonder as he beat the world's best walkers again with 1:18:24 in the men's 20km in Podebrady. His time was a PB and the fastest ever recorded in this competition. In a superb race, where the first five finishers produced PBs, tactics prevailed before a

blazing finale. Peréz's decisive effort came on the last 2km lap when he accelerated away from China's **Tan Mingjun**, who in an effort to recover the lead, let his emotions get the better of his technique, getting disqualified in the last 80m (although he continued to walk until the finish). Mexico's **Bernardo Segura** also suffered the same indignity as he battled side by side with countryman **Daniel García**, who was eventually awarded the silver with 1:18:27.

**Nick A'Hern** was the best of the Australians with a 12<sup>th</sup> placed time of 1:20:04 (the first 10 were all under 1:20), while youngsters **Dion Russell** (50<sup>th</sup>) and **Nathan Deakies** (53<sup>rd</sup>) rounded out the team points. Again, the walking was excellent, with 134 of the 140 starters finishing.

<b>IAAF World Cup 20km Men, Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> April 1997</b>			
1.	Jefferson Pérez	ECU	1:18:24
2.	Daniel García	MEX	1:18:27
3.	Ilya Markov	RUS	1:18:30
...			
12.	<b>Nicholas Ahern</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:20:04</b>
50.	<b>Dion Russell</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:23:40</b>
53.	<b>Nathan Deakes</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:23:58</b>
68.	<b>Brent Vallance</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:25:23</b>
96.	<b>Paul Copeland</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:29:53</b>

20 year old Russian **Irina Stankina** overcame a strong challenge from her compatriot **Olimpiada Ivanova** to win the 10km race in 41:52, with China **Gu Yan** third. **Jane Saville** finished 40<sup>th</sup> and **Jill Maybir-Barrett** finished 41<sup>st</sup>, the top Australians. The women finished 10<sup>th</sup> overall out of 26 teams, a good performance. Overall, 112 of the 117 starters finished, an excellent statistic.

<b>IAAF World Cup 10km Women, Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> April 1997</b>			
1.	Irina Stankina	RUS	41:52
2.	Olimpiada Ivanova	RUS	41:59
3.	Gu Yan	CHN	42:15
...			
40.	<b>Jane Saville</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>45:19</b>
41.	<b>Jill Maybir-Barrett</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>45:20</b>
48.	<b>Natalie Saville</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>46:19</b>
53.	<b>Simone Wolowiec</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>46:45</b>
60.	<b>Wendy Muldoon</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>47:22</b>

Spain's **Jesus Garcia**, his arms punching high like a boxer, battled his way out of the pack to win the men's 50km race in Podebrady. The 1993 World Champion clocked 3:39:54 but it was the bravery of his effort, which saw him move from seventh to first place in the last 15km, that delighted the crowds lining the course. After 44km of this gruelling event, Russia's **Oleg Ishutkin** led the race with a 45 second advantage on his countryman **Nikolay Matyukhin**, with Poland's **Tomasz Lipiec** a clear third. It was then that Garcia, who had been moving through the field with the 1995 World Champion **Valentin Kononen**, made his decisive effort. With head bowed and arms flailing, Garcia attacked with every ounce of energy. First he moved past Lipiec and then he powered past Matyukhin. In a race so long that it started in sunshine and ended in a flurry of snow, the final 2km lap would prove decisive. Ishutkin went through the bell in 3:31:03 with Garcia now some 19 seconds behind, hurling his red gloves to the ground for the last round. Steadily the gap was closed, 16 seconds became 12 seconds and suddenly a commanding lead seemed to have collapsed. As the leader rounded a bend with perhaps 600 metres left he looked back ... in despair as Garcia closed on his shoulder. Broken at last, Ishutkin accepted defeat as Garcia crossed the line in triumph. Kononen rallied well to take the bronze medal in 3:41:09 with Matyukhin fourth in 3:41:36.

**Duane Cousins** finished the best of the Australians with 4:07:17 and 45<sup>th</sup> place. **Michael Harvey**, in his 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive World Cup appearance, finished 64<sup>th</sup> with 4:14:09, another good walk. He finished one place ahead of **Dominic McGrath** who rounded out the team points with 65<sup>th</sup>. There were 88 finishers from the 108 starters, and the Australian men's team finished 12<sup>th</sup> overall out of the 36 teams in the overall men's teams competition.

<b>IAAF World Cup 50km Men, Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> April 1997</b>			
1.	Jesús Ángel García	ESP	3:39:54
2.	Oleg Ishutkin	RUS	3:40:12
3.	Valentin Kononen	FIN	3:41:09

...			
45.	Duane Cousins	AUS	4:07:17
64.	Michael Harvey	AUS	4:14:09
65.	Dominic McGrath	AUS	4:14:49
79.	Shane Pearson	AUS	4:28:53

**31<sup>st</sup> Lake Burley Griffin Carnival**  
**Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June 1997**

**Nick A'Hern**, who was having an excellent year thus far, recorded his second LBG 20 Mile win with a 2 minute PB time of 2:22:19 after an exciting race against current holder **Craig Barrett**. Only 7 seconds separated the two walkers at the end. The strong Regal team of A'Hern, **Luke Adams** and **Damian O'Mara** beat VRWC by 1 point in a very close teams race. 22 year old **Dion Russell** produced a great third place in his first Canberra 20 mile. Up till this point, Dion had been a 20km specialist but new coach Ron Weigel had other ideas and had started his refocus towards the longer events. 20 year old Luke Adams walked a great race for fourth place and also gave notice of things to come.

<b>LBG 20 Miles Walk, Canberra, Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June 1997</b>			
1.	Nick A'Hern	REGAL	2:22:19
2.	Craig Barrett	NZ	2:22:26
3.	Dion Russell	VRWC	2:27:36
4.	Luke Adams	REGAL	2:33:05
5.	Shane Pearson	QRWC	2:34:24
6.	Duane Cousins	VRWC	2:34:43
7.	Michael Harvey	VRWC	2:34:58
8.	Tony Sargisson	NZ	2:37:01
9.	Scott Nelson	NZ	2:37:24
10.	Mark Coleman	PROV	2:44:19
11.	Damian O'Mara	REGAL	2:45:45
12.	Marcus Dwyer	VRWC	2:47:29
13.	Brian Trower	VRWC	2:49:28
14.	Peter Bennett	QRWC	2:52:16
15.	John Stenhouse	ACT	2:58:26
16.	Rod Sadler	PROV	2:59:46
17.	Alex Crawford	REGAL	3:00:38
18.	Noel Wooler	QRWC	3:07:58
19.	Duncan Knox	VRWC	3:09:35
20.	Daniel Andrikis	ACT	3:10:15
21.	Robin Whyte	ACT	3:11:57
22.	Harry Summers	VRWC	3:20:02
23.	Peter Blood	PROV	3:21:02
24.	Ann Staunton (F)	ACT	3:29:40
25.	Bill Starr	SA	3:54:24
26.	Lachlan Wilkinson	ACT	4:05:22
<b>Teams</b>			
1.	REGAL	42	A'Hern, Adams, O'Mara, Crawford
2.	VRWC	41	Russell, Cousins, Harvey
3.	NZL	38	Barrett, Nelson, Sargisson
4.	QLD	25	Pearson, Bennett, Wooler
5.	PROV	15	Coleman, Sadler, Blood
6.	A.C.T.	11	Stenhouse, Andronikis, Whyte

**Second Federation Carnival, including Glover Shield 20km**  
**Albert Park Lake, Melbourne, Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> July 1997**

Victorians were to the fore in the Glover Shield 20km, held in Melbourne in late July, with **Nathan Deakes** 1:26:25, **Duane Cousins** 1:29:14 and **Dominic McGrath** 1:30:16 ensuring a teams win for Victoria. None of the other top walkers were in attendance.

<b>Glover Shield 20km Walk, Melbourne, Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> July 1997</b>			
1	Nathan Deakes	VRWC	1:26:25
2	Duane Cousins	VRWC	1:29:14
3	Dominic McGrath	VRWC	1:30:16
4	Troy Stanton	NSW	1:35:33
5	Mark Coleman	PROV	1:37:02
6	Willi Sawall	PROV	1:41:45
7	Trenton Hawkins	VRWC	1:41:56
8	Rod Sadler	PROV	1:47:20
9	Peter Vysma	VRWC	1:47:24
10	Robin Whyte	ACT	1:53:12
11	Andrew Mitchell	NSW	1:55:00
12	Frank Overton	NSW	2:06:43
13	Michael Mulligan	NSW	2:10:53
14	Phil Donelan	NSW	2:29:51
-	Paul Kennedy	VRWC	DNF
-	Daniel Thorne	PROV	DNF
-	Marcus Dwyer	VRWC	DQ
Teams			
1.	VRWC	34	2. Prov 20
3.	NSW	14	4. VRWC2 10

### **6<sup>th</sup> IAAF World Athletics Championships Athens, 1-10 August 1997**

The 6<sup>th</sup> World Championships in Athletics were held at the Olympic Stadium, Athens, from 1-10 August 1997. With 1882 athletes from 198 nations, it was a huge event that was used as proof positive of Athens' and Greece's ability to organize large-scale, international sporting events. The following year, the 2004 Olympic Games were awarded to that city.

The men's 20km was first up, with Mexican **Daniel Garcia** exacting his revenge after being disqualified in the two previous editions of the World Championships, winning with 1:21:53. **Nick A'Hern** was tripped and pushed in a rough race, fading to finish 18<sup>th</sup> with 1:25:46, while **Dion Russell** finished 31<sup>st</sup> with 1:30:49.

<b>IAAF World Champs 20km Walk Men, Athens, Sat 2<sup>nd</sup> August</b>			
1.	Daniel Garcia	MEX	1:21:43
2.	Mikhail Shchennikov	RUS	1:21:53
3.	Mikhail Khmelinskiy	BLR	1:22:01
...			
<b>18.</b>	<b>Nick A'Hern</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:25:46</b>
<b>31.</b>	<b>Dion Russell</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:30:49</b>

Although only 41 women fronted for the 10km event, two heats were scheduled for Monday 4<sup>th</sup> August, with the final to be held on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> August. Don't ask me why! Perhaps the tight 1km lap made this advisable. In any case, this added extra interest to the event - who would make the 20 places in the final (first 8 in each heat plus the next fastest 4 finishers). As it turned out, there were no real surprises in the heats with all the favourites coming through unscathed. Sadly, **Jane Saville**, who was our only competitor, finished 13<sup>th</sup> in the second heat, with a time of 46:01, and missed out on the final.

Of the 20 starters in the final, there were 15 finishers, 2 DQs and 3 non-finishers. **Annarita Sidoti** from Italy led all the way for a great win. She had been placed 6<sup>th</sup> in the recent World Cup and improved on that performance with a gutsy walk. Russian walker Olympiada Ivanova, who finished second to Sidoti, soon tested positive and lost her silver medal. This was the first hint of what turned out to be a 20+ year saga of institutional drug cheating by Russia.

<b>IAAF World Champs 10km Walk Women, Athens, Thur 7<sup>th</sup> Aug</b>			
1.	Annarita Sidoti	ITA	42:55
2.	Olga Kardopoltseva	BLR	43:30
3.	Valentina Tsybulskaya	BLR	43:49

...		
-	<b>Jane Saville</b>	<b>AUS 13<sup>th</sup> Heat 1 (46:01)</b>

**Robert Korzeniowski** built on his 1996 Olympic 50km victory with a World Championship 50km victory, his winning time of 3:44:46 ensuring he finished ahead of **Jesus Angel Garcia** of Spain, second with 3:44:59. The two had a heated battle, exchanging the lead several times over the last 20km. **Miguel Rodriguez** of Mexico was third in 3:48:30. Alas, no Australians in this race.

<b>IAAF World Champs 50km Walk Men, Athens, Thur 7<sup>th</sup> Aug</b>			
1.	Robert Korzeniowski	POL	3:44:46
2.	Jesus Angel Garcia	ESP	3:44:59
3.	Miguel Rodriguez	MEX	3:48:30

### **1997 World University Games Catalia, Sicily, 19-31 August 1997**

The athletics at the 1997 Summer Universiade took place in the Stadio Cibali in Catania, Sicily, with 3 Australian walkers in action – **Nathan Deakes, Brent Vallance** and **Jane Saville**.

For Deakes, it was his third international vest after his 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the 1996 World Junior championships and a 1997 Race Walking World Cup appearance earlier in the year. He celebrated his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday two days before the Universiade started so was definitely amongst the youngsters in the field. Vallance, at 25 years of age, was also in his third international appearance, having already competed in the 1995 and 1997 World Cup events. For the record, Deakes finished 5<sup>th</sup> and Vallance 9<sup>th</sup> of the 14 competitors.

<b>1997 World University Games 20km Men, Sicily, August 1997</b>			
1.	Ilia Markov	RUS	1:25:36
2.	Alejandro Lopez	MEX	1:26:00
3.	Arturo De Mezza	ITA	1:26:12
	---		
<b>5.</b>	<b>Nathan Deakes</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:28:04</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Brent Vallance</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:32:27</b>

Saville finished 10<sup>th</sup> out of the 14 starters in the women's 10km walk. At 23 years of age, she was now a seasoned international, have competed in the 1990 and 1992 World Juniors, the 1993 Racewalking World Cup, the 1994 Commonwealth Games, the 1996 Olympic Games and the 1997 IAAF World Championships.

<b>1997 World University Games 10km Women, Sicily, Aug 1997</b>			
1.	Larissa Ramazanova	BLR	44:01
2.	Rossella Giordana	ITA	44:31
3.	Annarita Sidoti	ITA	44:38
	...		
<b>10.</b>	<b>Jane Saville</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>49:06</b>

### **Australian Roadwalk Championships Chipping Norton, Sydney, Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September 1997**

The Australian Roadwalk Championships had, in the past, normally included an Australian 20km Championship. But with this event now being held in conjunction with the Australian T&F Championships during the summer, Athletics Australia had agreed to include an Australian 30km Championship with the winter roadwalks. Now male Australian walkers would have 20km, 30km and 50km championships each year.

**Duane Cousins** proved an easy winner in this inaugural championship, with a time of 2:18:31. The ageless **Michael Harvey** was second with 2:23:30, ahead of South Australian youngster **Darren Bown**, with 2:25:32. The field was a very small one.

<b>Australian 30km Championship, Sydney, Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September</b>			
1.	Duane Cousins	VIC	2:18:31
2.	Michael Harvey	VIC	2:23:30
3.	Darren Bown	SA	2:25:32
4.	Shane Pearson	QLD	2:26:16
5.	Chris Bone	NSW	2:33:52
6.	Damian O'Mara	NSW	2:40:34

**1997 Australian 50km Championship, incorporating the 1998 Commonwealth Games 50km Trial  
Middle Park, Melbourne, Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December 1997**

1998 saw a change to the Commonwealth Games walking schedule as the 30km event for men was replaced by the two international distances of 20km and 50km. So now the Commonwealth Games matched the Olympics with three walks on offer.

The 50km selection trial was held in conjunction with the Australian Championship in Melbourne in December 1997, with the A standard of 4:00:00 the obvious required mark.

New AIS coach Ron Weigel had reviewed his walkers and decided to gear **Dion Russell**'s training towards the 50km event. His training load increased and his weight dropped. While he had previously raced at 78-80 kg, he soon dropped to a new racing weight of 70-72 kg.. The result was his first Open title and a great time of 3:48:12. Second and third places were also under the required standard. While **Duane Cousins** made no mistakes with 3:57:40, it was a different story for **Dominic McGrath**. He started slowly as usual, with his first 10km covered in 49:18, well back in the field. But as the race progressed, he sped up and his last 5km saw him storm home to break the 4 hour standard. This was the first time that 3 walkers had broken 4 hours in the same race in Australia, and their performances guaranteed them Commonwealth Games spots. But they would have to wait until August before they finally saw their names in print.

<b>Aust 50km Championship, Melbourne, Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> Dec 1997</b>			
1.	Dion Russell	VIC	3:48:12
2.	Duane Cousins	VIC	3:57:40
3.	Dominic McGrath	VIC	3:59:15
4.	Shane Pearson	QLD	4:12:29
5.	Darren Bown	SA	4:35:13
-	Marcus Dwyer	VIC	DQ
-	Michael Harvey	VIC	DNF
-	Mark Thomas	VIC	DNF
-	Brian Trower	VIC	DNF
-	Brent Vallance	NSW	DNF
-	Matthew Griggs	ACT	DNF

**1998**

The year started with the news that the IAAF was going to increase the women's major championship distance from 10km to 20km, starting from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1999. This meant that the 1998 Australian women's 10km championship would probably be the final one.

**1998 Australian 20km Championship and Commonwealth Games 20km Trial Men  
Princes Park, Melbourne, Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March 1998**

The men's 20km Commonwealth Games trial was held in conjunction with the Australian 20km Championship in Melbourne. The race was scheduled for Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March 1998, was on a 2km circuit around Princes Park, with the start/finish alongside the Carlton Football Club stadium. **Nick A'Hern** was an easy winner in **1:22:07** – no issues there! The real turmoil was a couple of minutes further back in the field - **Nathan Deakes** crossed the finishing line in second place in around 1:24 minutes, only to discover that he had picked up a third report late in the race and been disqualified. The minor places were subsequently taken by **Dion Russell** and **Duane Cousins** but the times were not good enough to guarantee selection (the A standard was set at 1:23:30 and the B standard at 1:26:00).

<b>Comm Games 20km Trial, Melbourne, Thur 12<sup>th</sup> March 1998</b>			
1.	Nick A'Hern	NSW	1:22:27
2.	Dion Russell	VIC	1:27:02
3.	Duane Cousins	VIC	1:28:23
4.	Brent Vallance	NSW	1:32:56
5.	Brad Malcolm	VIC	1:33:41
6.	Michael Harvey	VIC	1:35:52
7.	Shane Pearson	QLD	1:37:17
8.	Mark Thomas	VIC	1:39:25
9.	Marcus Dwyer	VIC	1:41:08
10.	Christian Bone	WA	1:45:47
11.	Graham Watt	VIC	2:04:57
-	Mark Donahoo	VIC	DNF
-	Matthew Griggs	ACT	DNF
-	Darren Bown	SA	DNF
-	Noel Wooler	QLD	DNF
-	Andrew Jamieson	VIC	DNF
-	Damien O'Mara	NSW	DNF
-	Luke Adams	NSW	DNF
-	Anthony Miles	QLD	DNF
-	Mark Blackwood	VIC	DQ
-	Nathan Deakes	VIC	DQ
-	Craig Barrett	NZ	DQ

With only one team spot clearly filled, the race was on to clinch the second and third positions. Brent Vallance joined the AIS team going to Europe to race the European summer. This was his last chance to get the points on the scoreboard and he had to self-fund his trip. On May 23<sup>rd</sup> in Naumburg, Deakes recorded an A qualifying time of 1:23:24 and Vallance recorded 1:24:34 for a B qualifier. Deakes' spot now looked confirmed but had Vallance done enough to secure the final berth?

Apart from his one failure at the National 20km Championship in March, Vallance had raced well. He had recorded 1:25:01 at the Adelaide GP on 26/01/98, 1:24:34 in Naumburg on 23/05/98, and won the Second Federation event in Geelong in 1:24:37 (2/08/98). The selectors obviously had him in mind for the final spot and, when A'Herb and Deakes were asked to participate in a pre-departure 10km trial in August, he was called by Ron Weigel two days before the event and told he was also expected to walk. Selector Brian Rowe had rung Ron to inform him it would be a three man pre-departure trial. The times of the 3 walkers were as follows

Nick A'Hern	39:20
Nathan Deakes	40:14
Brent Vallance	41:43

The selectors decided that Vallance had done enough and a 3 man team was finally confirmed to contest the 20km in Kuala Lumpur.

### **Australian Track & Field Championships 1997-98 Olympic Park, Melbourne, Victoria 13 - 15 March 1998**

The men were back in action 3 days later, contesting the 5000m track walk at the Australian T&F Championships in Melbourne. **Nick A'Hern** won his seventh 5000m track title, marking him as one of our greatest ever short distance exponents. **Dion Russell** was second and New Zealander **Scott Nelson** was third.

Sadly, this was the last time this championship walk was contested. As Athletics Australia was now scheduling the Australian 20km title at the annual T&F Championships and as the men's 30km championship had also been recently added, they decided to remove the men's and women's 5000m walks from the T&F titles. It would take until 2014 for 10,000m track walks for men and women would be added back into the T&F Championships.

<b>5,000m Track Walk Men, Melbourne, Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March 1998</b>			
1	Nick A'Hern	1969	NSW 19:12.92
2	Dion Russell	1975	VIC 19:39.62



3	Scott Nelson	1969	NZL	20:11.05
4	Troy Sundstrom	1981	NSW	20:28.65
5	Duane Cousins	1973	VIC	20:33.13
6	Noel Wooler	1975	QLD	21:02.45
7	Darren Bown	1974	SA	21:06.15
8	Liam Murphy	1979	SA	21:13.06
9	Mark Thomas	1962	VIC	21:33.56
10	Marcus Dwyer	1977	VIC	21:40.57
11	Michael Harvey	1962	VIC	21:56.10
12	Jon Gawley	1980	NSW	22:08.28
13	Paul Kennedy	1957	VIC	22:09.15
14	Shane Pearson	1972	QLD	22:16.58
15	Duncan Knox	1959	VIC	22:48.57
16	Christian Bone	1977	WA	23:04.31
17	David Smyth	1969	NZL	27:08.22
-	Mark Blackwood	1977	VIC	DQ
-	Brent Vallance	1972	NSW	DQ
-	Mathew Golebiowski	1980	NSW	DQ

**32<sup>nd</sup> Lake Burley Griffin Carnival**  
**Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June 1998**

The lead group of **Duane Cousins, Craig Barrett, Dion Russell, Nathan Deakes** and **Brent Vallance** powered through the first 5 miles of the LBG 20 Miler in 36:00 and a great race looked assured. Barrett and Deakes then upped the ante, walking the next 5 miles in under 34 minutes to break the leading group apart. The two man battle continued until the 30km mark which was reached in around 2:11. At this stage, Barrett literally sprinted home to win by nearly 2 minutes. His PB time of 2:19:37 was second only to Willi Sawall. 20 year old Victorian Deakes gave notice of his ability with his time of 2:21:50 – the fastest inaugural performance ever. The strong VRWC team of Deakes, Russell and **Duane Cousins** was too strong for the opposition and easily took the teams race. All three were all AIS scholarship holders at the time.

1.	Craig Barrett	NZL	2:19:37
2.	Nathan Deakes	VRWC	2:21:50
3.	Dion Russell	VRWC	2:26:14
4.	Duane Cousins	VRWC	2:28:47
5.	Brent Vallance	REGAL	2:30:12
6.	Luke Adams	REGAL	2:31:16
7.	Marcus Dwyer	VRWC	2:39:20
8.	Michael Harvey	VRWC	2:42:35
9.	Simon Baker	VRWC	2:44:10
10.	Tony Sargisson	NZL	2:45:43
11.	Brad Malcolm	VRWC	2:47:47
12.	Mark Dossetor	ACT	2:49:39
13.	Trenton Hawkins	VRWC	2:50:42
14.	Noel Woolmer	QLD	2:54:44
15.	Peter Bennett	QLD	2:55:10
16.	Duncan Knox	VRWC	2:56:47
17.	Mark Donahoo	VRWC	3:00:19
18.	John Stenhouse	ACT	3:03:26
19.	Alex Crawford	REGAL	3:17:17
20.	Robin Whyte	ACT	3:22:18
21.	Brian Glover	VRWC	3:30:08
22.	Peter Luke	PROV	3:31:00
23.	Daryl Biggin	PROV	3:35:48
24.	Caleb Maybir	QLD	3:39:47
25.	Russell McFarlane	PROV	3:40:10
26.	Ann Staunton (F)	ACT	3:43:40
27.	Lachlan Wilkinson	ACT	3:47:42

28.	Bill Starr		SA	3:52:08
29.	Peter Waddell		ACT	3:52:10
-	Harry Summers		VRWC	DNF
-	Michael Pearson		REGAL	DNF
Teams				
1.	VIC1	61	Deakes,Russell, Cousins, Harvey	
2.	VIC2	45	Dwyer, Baker, Malcolm	
3.	REGAL	43	Vallance, Adams, Crawford	
4.	ACT	29	Dossetor, Stenhouse, Whyte	
5.	QLD	24	Wooler, Bennett, Maybir	
6.	VIC3	18	Hawkins, Glover	
7.	PROV	11	Luke, Biggins, McFarlane	

### 1998 Federation Carnival, including Glover Shield 20km Barwon River, Geelong, Victoria, Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1998

The annual Federation Carnival was held in early August on a course alongside the Barwon River in Geelong. **Brent Vallance**, pressing his case for Commonwealth Games selection, was an easy winner with 1:24:37, ahead of Victorians **Brad Malcolm** and **Marcus Dwyer**. Vallance was the only one of the top line walkers who participated.

Glover Shield 20km, Geelong, Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> August 1998				
1	Brent Vallance		Regal	1:24.37
2	Brad Malcolm		VRWC	1:29.16
3	Marcus Dwyer		VRWC	1:29.35
4	Jon Gawley		NSW	1:30.08
5	Warren Russell		NSW	1:32.20
6	Trenton Hawkins		VRWC	1:36.17
7	Duncan Knox		VRWC	1:41.39
8	Matthew Golebiowski		Regal	1:43.06
9	Mark Donahoo		VRWC	1:45.02
10	Graham Watt		VRWC	1:53.13
11	Andrew Mitchell		NSW	1:56.00
12	Robin Whyte		ACT	1:58.52
13	Bob Chapman		ACT	2:03.08
14	Bob Perry		NSW	2:08.07
15	Frank Overton		NSW	2:08.35
16	Mike Mulligan		NSW	2:09.25
-	Mark Blackwood		VRWC	DQ
-	Daniel Thorne		Provincial	DNF
-	Michael Pearson		Regal	DNF
Teams				
1 VRWC 37 2 NSW 28 3 Regal 24 4 VRWC2 22 5 ACT 9				

### 1998 Australian 10km Championship and Commonwealth Games 10km Trial Women Homebush, Sydney, Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August 1998

The women's Commonwealth Games 10km walk trial was held at the official T&F selection trials at Homebush in Sydney on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August 1998 and **Kerry Saxby-Junna** had yet another easy win. Her position of dominance on the Australian scene looked set to continue for some time yet and few people thought that only months later she would suffer defeat in Kuala Lumpur at the hands of the young **Jane Saville**. Saville had on this occasion finished over 3 minutes behind Kerry and just under the qualifying standard of 47:00. Her younger sister **Natalie Saville** was only 25 seconds further back in third place but unfortunately that small gap was what separated her from her first Commonwealth Games berth. She would have to wait another 4 years for her opportunity.

<b>Comm Games 10km Trial, Sydney, Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August 1998</b>			
1.	Kerry Saxby-Junna	NSW	43:38
2.	Jane Saville	NSW	46:42
3.	Natalie Saville	NSW	47:07
4.	Simone Wollowiec	VIC	47:40
5.	Michelle French	NSW	49:09
6.	Megan Chapman	NSW?	49:28
7.	Wendy Muldoon	VIC	49:47
8.	Terease Letherby	QLD	49:54
9.	Linda Coffee	NSW	50:03
10.	Justine Toniti-Fillipini	VIC	50:26
-	Cheryl Webb	NSW	DQ

### **Australian Roadwalk Championships Davies Park, Brisbane, Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 1998**

The Australian Roadwalk Championships in Brisbane, at the start of September, included the men's 30km Australian Championship, as well as the inaugural women's 20km Australian Championship. Being held in the immediate leadup to the Commonwealth Games, the top Australians bypassed this meet, but not New Zealander **Craig Barrett**, who powered through for a win with 2:13:20. Two weeks later, he would be racing in the Commonwealth Games 50km in Kuala Lumpur.

<b>Australian 30km Championship, Brisbane, Sun 6<sup>th</sup> Sept 1998</b>			
1.	Craig Barrett	NZL	2:13:20
2.	Luke Adams	NSW	2:21:48
3.	Michael Harvey	VIC	2:25:39
4.	Simon Baker	VIC	2:19:17
5.	Shane Pearson	QLD	2:33:04
6.	Mark Thomas	VIC	2:29:17
7.	Peter Bennett	QLD	2:41:51
8.	Andrew Ludwig	QLD	2:53:31
9.	Chris Bone	NSW	3:05:37
10.	Caleb Maybir	QLD	3:21:31
Teams			
1.	VIC	Harvey, Baker, Thomas	
2.	QLD	Pearson, Bennett, Ludwig	

### **XVI Commonwealth Games Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 11-21 September 1998**

For the first time in its 68 year history, the Commonwealth Games were held in Asia. The XVI Games in Kuala Lumpur were also the first Games to feature team sports - an overwhelming success that added large numbers to both participators and TV audience numbers. A new record of 70 countries sent a total of 5,250 athletes and officials to the KL Games. The top five countries in the medal standing were Australia, England, Canada, Malaysia and South Africa. Fifteen sports were featured – aquatics, athletics, badminton, boxing, cricket, cycling, gymnastics, hockey, netball, lawn bowls, rugby 7s, shooting, tenpin bowling, weightlifting and wrestling.

The walks and marathons promised to be demanding events, given the severe tropical climate of Kuala Lumpur, which is situated on the Malaysian coast and almost on the equator.

#### **20km Walk, Titiwangsa Lake Gardens, KL, Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September 1998**

The men's 20km walk was first up, being held in the Titiwangsa Lake Gardens on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September. **Nick A'Hern**, 28, the Australian team men's captain, destroyed the rest of the field with surges at 5km and 10km, to win a second Commonwealth Games title with 1:24:59. "*Conditions were very tough, reminiscent of Atlanta, that heat especially coming off the road surface*", A'Hern said, recalling his stoic fourth in this event at the last Olympics. To add to the delight of the Australian contingent, his young team mate **Nathan Deakes** collected the bronze on his Games

debut, just behind **Arturo Huerta** of Canada. Who would have thought at that time that Nathan would go on to win double golds at the next 2 Commonwealth Games. After all his efforts to make the team, **Brent Vallance** had a shocker and walked what he described as the worst race of his life. It just goes to show that even with the best preparations, things can still go wrong on the day.

<b>1998 Commonwealth Games 20km Walk, Thur 17<sup>th</sup> September</b>			
1.	<b>Nicholas A'Hern</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>1:24:59</b>
2.	Arturo Huerta	Canada	1:25:49
3.	<b>Nathan Deakes</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>1:26:06</b>
4.	Darrell Stone	England	1:26:37
5.	David Rotich	Kenya	1:26:57
6.	Teoh Boon Lim	Malaysia	1:27:47
7.	Martin Bell	Scotland	1:29:20
8.	Julius Sawe	Kenya	1:29:23
9.	Harbans Narinder Singh	Malaysia	1:30:13
10.	Christopher Maddocks	England	1:30:21
11.	Timothy Berrett	Canada	1:31:19
12.	Andrew Drake	England	1:32:04
13.	Stephen Partington	Isle of Man	1:32:15
14.	<b>Brent Vallance</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>1:36:29</b>
15.	Mohamed Haizy	Malaysia	1:36:32
16.	Dip Chand	Fiji	1:52:47
17.	Pradeep Chand	Fiji	2:03:38

#### **10km Walk, Titiwangsa Lake Gardens, KL, Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September 1998**

**Jane Saville** came to the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games after finishing second behind **Kerry Saxby-Junna** at the trial. The two Australian girls were expected to do well and they were in the lead pack throughout the race. The relentless pace took its toll as the leading group dropped and eventually only the Australians and the Malaysians were left. It came down to a battle of three with Saville, Saxby-Junna and **Yu Fang Yuan** shoulder to shoulder. When the chief judge stepped onto the track, the question was – which of the three would go? It was the Malaysian and all of a sudden it was the two Australians fighting out gold in the last lap. To Saville's credit, she was able to produce that something extra and she gradually forged the winning break, going on to claim her first international gold.

<b>1998 Commonwealth Games 10km Walk, Sat 19<sup>th</sup> September</b>			
1.	<b>Jane Saville</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>43:57 (GR)</b>
2.	<b>Kerry Saxby-Junna</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>44:27</b>
3.	Lisa Kehler	England	45:03
4.	Janice McCaffrey	Canada	46:36
5.	Annastasia Raj	Malaysia	46:41
6.	Carolyn Partington	Isle of Man	48:09
7.	Victoria Lupton	England	48:27
8.	Kimberley Braznell	England	51:15
9.	Monica Okumu	Kenya	51:56
10.	Karen Kneale	Isle of Man	52:25
11.	Angela Keogh	Norfolk Island	55:00
-	Cheng Tong Lean	Malaysia	DQ
-	Yu Fang Yuan	Malaysia	DQ

#### **50km Walk, Titiwangsa Lake Gardens, KL, Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September 1998**

New Zealand 50km entrant Craig Barrett was on the last of 19 laps around the course at Lake Titiwangsa, just 1km from the finish and leading the field by six minutes. Another five minutes and the gold would be his, in what is the most brutal event in the Games. And then he collapsed. Despite the suffocating heat and humidity, with temperatures nudging 40°C, there had been no warning that Barrett would hit the wall and short-circuit both body and brain. He was maintaining good pace and showing only the usual signs of distress that walkers do after more than four hours on the road. But rounding a bend, he buckled. What followed was a danse macabre.

In pathetic scenes reminiscent of the 1984 Olympic Games when women's marathon runner Gabrielle Andersson Scheiss of Switzerland, her limbs askew, lurched and staggered in the final straight, Barrett's auto-pilot went haywire.

His left leg refused to follow his right. As if paralysed, it flapped and sagged and dragged behind him. He attempted to keep going, then stopped. He sat in the gutter, then tried again. After 4 aborted attempts to resume, his struggle captured vividly by television cameras, he shuffled backwards in the final throes of consciousness.

New Zealand's chef de mission, Les Mills, having just arrived at the walk venue and well away from the finish line, was the only Kiwi official to witness the collapse. Marshalls had not wanted to intervene, as Barrett was leading. But Mills, a former Commonwealth Games discus gold medallist, ordered the ambulance in, fearing the walker's life could be at risk if he stayed out on the course much longer.

As the New Zealander was helped into the ambulance, Malaysian **Govindaswamy Saravanan**, a 28 year old bank clerk, cruised past. *"I saw him collapse so I knew I had gold. I knew I just had to keep my pace and finish the race to win,"* Saravanan said. Pandemonium broke out as he crossed the finish line in 4:10:05, becoming the first Malaysian ever to win an Commonwealth athletics gold.

Even before his adoring countrymen put the gold medal around his neck and handed him his winning bonus incentive of \$50,000, Saravanan admitted he was a shattered man. *"One more thing"*, he called out as a huddle of journalists broke up around him. *"I want to announce my retirement. Although this is my first international race, I couldn't keep this up."* He had won Malaysia's only athletics medal of the Games. Of course he did not retire and is recorded as winning gold in the 2001 South East Asian Games 50km on the same Lake Titivangsa course in Kuala Lumpur with a time of 4:34:04.

**Duane Cousins** walked a very well judged race in the atrocious conditions, storming home for 2<sup>nd</sup> place in 4:10:30, just 25 seconds behind the winner. **Dominic McGrath** raced with his usual tactics, starting slowly and speeding up to finish in 3<sup>rd</sup> place in 4:12:52, blood streaming down his right leg from chafing caused by ill-fitting shorts. **Dion Russell**, who had gone into the race as one of the favourites, led early, but the heat was too much and he retired before halfway.

By the evening, Barrett had recovered sufficiently to be released from hospital but he was shattered, knowing that he had been so close to the win.

Saravanan was not the only Malaysian 50km walker in the news. Ninth placed **Thirukumaran Balaysendaran** had walked the entire race in bare feet, something he usually did and something he continued to do throughout his long career until he eventually retired in 2011.

<b>1998 Commonwealth Games 50km Walk, Mon 21<sup>st</sup> September</b>			
1.	Govindaswamy Saravanan	Malaysia	4:10:05
2.	<b>Duane Cousins</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>4:10:30</b>
3.	<b>Dominic McGrath</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>4:12:52</b>
4.	Steven Hollier	England	4:18:41
5.	Mark Easton	England	4:22:23
6.	Graham White	Scotland	4:30:17
7.	Kannian Pushparajan	Malaysia	4:31:22
8.	Christopher Cheeseman	England	4:38:36
9.	Thirukumaran Balaysendaran	Malaysia	4:44:33
10.	Tony Sargisson	New Zealand	4:45:04
-	Timothy Berrett	Canada	DNF
-	<b>Dion Russell</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>DNF</b>
-	Craig Barrett	New Zealand	DNF

### **1998 Australian 50km Championship and 1999 World Cup 50km Trial Melbourne, Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December 1998**

The 1999 World Cup 50km (men) and 20km (women) trials were held in Melbourne on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December, while the men's 20km trial was scheduled for March 1999.

Commonwealth Games medallists Duane Cousins and Dominic McGrath were given exemption from the World Cup 50km trial, as their Kuala Lumpur times were both under the AA standard which had been set at 4:20:00. The first 3 finishers in the trial also bettered this standard, thus ensuring a full team for the World Cup. **Dion Russell** excelled with the third fastest ever by an Australian (behind Simon Baker and Willi Sawall) – 3:47:04. **Shane Pearson** was well under with 4:14:01 but third placed **Michael Harvey** had to work hard to also make the cut. Marcus Dwyer had been 7 mins

up on him at the 30km mark but he was sick at the 31km point and then faded. Astonishingly, Harvey was not selected. The reason as put forward by AA – he was too old and they had a policy of youth. An intense period of lobbying started. Michael had many supporters and the AA position was shaky from a discrimination point of view. With the threat of legal action looming, AA eventually folded one week before the team were due to leave and added Michael. To his credit, Michael had kept focused throughout this long period of uncertainty and he walked well overseas, thus well and truly justifying his position in the team. It would be his 10<sup>th</sup> and final World Cup appearance.

**Australian 50km Championship, Melbourne, Sun 13<sup>th</sup> Dec 1998**

1.	Dion Russell	VIC	3:47:04
2.	Shane Pearson	QLD	4:14:01
3.	Michael Harvey	VIC	4:18:04
4.	Marcus Dwyer	VIC	4:25:52
5.	Simon Baker	VIC	4:53:20
6.	Jon Phillips	WA	5:38:20

**1999 World Cup 20km Trial Women  
Melbourne, Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December 1998**

The 1999 World Cup would now include a 20km for women, in place of the 10km distance. The women's trial was held alongside the 1998 Australian 50km championship in Melbourne. **Kerry Saxby-Junna** was a clear winner with 1:33:14, ahead of **Simone Wolowiec** with 1:37:18 and **Wendy Muldoon** 1:37:48. **Jane Saville** had a very bad day, finishing 5<sup>th</sup> behind her sister **Natalie Saville**. However, all 5 women were under 1:38:00 so their selection prospects looked good.

**World Cup Trial 20km Women, Melbourne, Sun 13<sup>th</sup> Dec 1998**

1.	Kerry Saxby-Junna	NSW	1:33:14
2.	Simone Wolowiec	VIC	1:36:10
3.	Wendy Muldoon	VIC	1:37:18
4.	Natalie Saville	NSW	1:37:48
5.	Jane Saville	NSW	1:37:52
6.	Lisa Paolini	NSW	1:41:12
7.	Jill Maybir	QLD	1:42:45
8.	Linda Coffee	NSW	1:42:51
9.	Tracy Rosengrave	VIC	1:44:20
10.	Sharon Schnyder	VIC	1:49:40
11.	Megan Peters	VIC	1:50:37
12.	Kim Coltman	VIC	1:51:13

**1999**

**1999 Australian Roadwalk Championships, incorporating the 1999 IAAF World Cup 20km Trial  
Princes Park, Melbourne, Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> March 1999**

The Australian Men's 20km Championship was held on a 2km course at Princes Park in Melbourne on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> March 1999. It was also the official World Cup Trial so was keenly contested by all those hoping for a berth. This was the first day of the Australian T&F Championships and an early start meant that many of us could catch the walks before we headed off to work for the day.

The men's 20km event started first at 7:30AM and it was a huge race in every way, with **Dion Russell** winning out with a PB time of 1:20:49. **Nathan Deakes** had won the Adelaide Grand Prix 20km in January in a huge PB of 1:20:20 and was right up there with Russell until his DQ. Deakes discussed this with me as follows in later years: *Dion's 1:20.49 at the Nationals in 1999 held along the path outside Princes Park, included a sub 40 last 10km. In fact, I think it may have even been 39.49 off the top of my head, making the first 10km 41.00. Again, I remember this day distinctively as I was dq'd whilst leading between 16 and 17km, when on track for my first sub 80.*

With his huge negative split, Russell surged away from **Nick A'Hern** who had to be content with his second place 1:21:18, while **Luke Adams** took the bronze with 1:23:52. At the time, this was the most impressive 20km race ever

held in Australia, with the first 5 Australians breaking 85 mins and the first 8 all breaking 90 mins. There were also a number of overseas walkers in the mix.

<b>Australian 20km Men, Melbourne, Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> March 1999</b>			
1.	Dion Russell	VIC	1:20:49
2.	Nicholas A'Hern	NSW	1:21:18
3.	Luke Adams	NSW	1:23:52
4.	Denis Langlois	FRA	1:23:57
5.	Duane Cousins	VIC	1:24:20
6.	Darren Bown	SA	1:24:57
7.	Troy Sundstrom	NSW	1:25:02
8.	Scott Nelson	NZL	1:26:49
9.	Liam Murphy	SA	1:26:58
10.	Dominic McGrath	VIC	1:27:19
11.	Boon Lim Teoh	MAS	1:29:20
12.	Sylvain Caudron	FRA	1:29:43
13.	Brent Vallance	NSW	1:31:38
14.	Shane Pearson	QLD	1:31:39
15.	Matthew Groves	TAS	1:31:56
16.	Christian Bone	NSW	1:32:55
17.	Andrew Duncan	WA	1:33:12
18.	Paul Kennedy	VIC	1:34:41
19.	Andrew Jamieson	VIC	1:35:46
20.	Graham Watt	VIC	1:41:20
21.	Noel Wooler	QLD	1:42:44
-	Duncan Knox	VIC	DNF
-	Jon Gawley	NSW	DNF
-	Brad Malcolm	VIC	DNF
-	Daniel Thorne	VIC	DNF
-	Nathan Deakes	VIC	DQ
-	Trenton Hawkins	VIC	DQ
-	Marcus Dwyer	VIC	DQ

As additional info, the women's Australian 10km Championship started 15 minutes later at 7:45AM, with 15 women joining the 28 men to add to the spectacle. Kerry Saxby-Junna and Jane Saville led out at a scorching pace but it was the veteran Saxby-Junna, then nearly 39 years of age, who won out, gradually clearing away to win with 43:09 ahead of Saville with 44:24.

### **1999 IAAF Race Walking World Cup Deauville/Mezidon, France, 1-2 May**

The 1999 IAAF World Cup continued the trend of previous years, with huge fields of 140 (men's 20km), 110 (men's 50km) and 123 (women's 20km). This was the first time that the women's 20km had been scheduled and it proved popular. A full team of 15 Australian walkers was selected, ensuring 5 competitors in each of the three events.

The men's 20km saw Bernardo Segura finish 1 sec in front of You Guohui and 8 secs in front of the first of the Russians. It was indeed an exciting spectacle. Alas, Australia's two big guns came unstuck, **Nick A'Hern** a DNF and **Nathan Deakes** disqualified towards the end of the race, while in the top 10. The other 3 Australian walkers all finished in the top half of the field, with **Darren Bown** 50<sup>th</sup>, **Luke Adams** 55<sup>th</sup> and **Troy Sundstrom** 59<sup>th</sup>. Overall, the Australian men came 14<sup>th</sup> out of the 27 competing nations.

<b>IAAF World Cup 20 km Walk Men, Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> May 1999</b>			
1.	Bernardo Segura	MEX	1:20:20
2.	Yu Guohui	CHN	1:20:21
3.	Vladimir Andreyev	RUS	1:20:29
...			
<b>50.</b>	<b>Darren Bown</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:29:31</b>
<b>55.</b>	<b>Luke Adams</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:30:11</b>

59.	<b>Troy Sundstrom</b>	AUS	1:30:28
-	<b>Nick A'Hern</b>	AUS	DNF
-	<b>Nathan Deakes</b>	AUS	DQ

Sergey Korepanov of Kazakstan won the 50km in 3:39:22, the fifth fastest 50km performance ever. The best of the Oceania walkers was New Zealander **Craig Barrett** who finished 13<sup>th</sup> with 3:48:14. **Dion Russell** was a DNF but **Dominic McGrath** dug deep when needed, finishing 36<sup>th</sup> with 4:00:50. **Duane Cousins** was 51<sup>st</sup> with 4:02:27 while **Michael Harvey** improved on his trial time by 10 minutes to finish 61<sup>st</sup> with 4:08:58. He had certainly justified his selection. Overall, the Australian 50km men finished 14<sup>th</sup> out of the competing countries.

#### IAAF World Cup 50 km Walk Men, Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1999

1.	Sergey Korepanov	KZK	3:39:22
2.	Tomasz Lipiec	POL	3:40:08
3.	Nikolay Matyukhin	RUS	3:40:13
	...		
46.	<b>Dominic McGrath</b>	AUS	4:00:50
51.	<b>Duane Cousins</b>	AUS	4:02:27
61.	<b>Michael Harvey</b>	AUS	4:08:58
73.	<b>Shane Pearson</b>	AUS	4:16:43
-	<b>Dion Russell</b>	AUS	DNF

There was one final late change to the Australian women's team, with **Lisa Paolini** replacing Natalie Saville, who was not satisfied with her form and withdrew. Overall, it was a high standard race, with the first 6 women all under 90 minutes. **Jane Saville** was the best of the Australians with 1:31:58, finishing 18<sup>th</sup>, 3 places ahead of **Kerry Saxby-Junna** who was 21<sup>st</sup> with 1:32:24. Paolini justified her late inclusion with 40<sup>th</sup> place in 1:36:20. The Australian women finished 6<sup>th</sup> out of 24 nations in the teams position, a very satisfying performance.

#### IAAF World Cup 20 km Walk Women, Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1999

1.	Hongyu Liu	CHN	1:27:32
2.	Natalya Fedoskina	RUS	1:27:35
3.	Norica Cimpean	ROM	1:27:48
	...		
18.	<b>Jane Saville</b>	AUS	1:31:58
21.	<b>Kerry Saxby-Junna</b>	AUS	1:32:24
40.	<b>Lisa Paolini</b>	AUS	1:36:20
59.	<b>Simone Wolowiec</b>	AUS	1:39:31
87.	<b>Wendy Muldoon</b>	AUS	1:46:25

### 33<sup>rd</sup> Lake Burley Griffin Carnival

#### Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June 1999

The carnival seemed to be attracting fewer men in the long 20 Mile event and more men and women in the 10 Mile events. In this edition, there were only 15 finishers for the 20 Mile event but there were 19 finishers for the Womens 10 Mile and 16 finishers in the Mens 10 Mile. Overall, there were some 200 competitors spread over the various events so the carnival was still looking healthy.

**Craig Barrett** scored his third win in 4 years and fellow New Zealander **Tony Sargisson** took second place, so a decision was made to award gold and silver to Craig and Tony but to also award medals to the first 3 Australians. So **Darren Bown** was also awarded gold, **Lachlan McDonald** was also awarded silver and **Duncan Knox** was awarded bronze. This precedent is still in effect today.

#### LBG 20 Miles Walk, Canberra, Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June 1999

1.	Craig Barrett	NZ	2:25:27
2.	Tony Sargisson	NZ	2:32:47
3.	Darren Bown	SA	2:41:14
4.	Lachlan McDonald	VRWC	2:51:19
5.	Duncan Knox	VRWC	2:55:07
6.	Michael Pearson	REGAL	3:03:24



7.	Peter Vysma	VRWC	3:03:43
8.	Peter Bennett	QRWC	3:05:35
9.	Robin Whyte	ACT	3:11:59
10.	Harry Summers	VRWC	3:26:18
11.	Bill Starr	SA	3:26:33
12.	Lachlan Wilkinson	ACT	3:29:31
13.	Graham Watt	VRWC	3:42:30
14.	Caleb Maybir	QRWC	3:59:34
15.	Peter Waddell	ACT	4:04:56
Teams			
1	VRWC	Lachlan McDonald, Duncan Knox, Peter Vysma	
2	ACT	Robin Whyte Lachlan Wilkinson, Peter Waddell	

### 20<sup>th</sup> World University Games Palma de Mallorca, Spain, 4-9 July 1999

The Athletics Tournament at the XX Summer Universiade took place in the new Estadio Son Moix in Palma de Mallorca, Spain from 4-9 July 1999. Jane Saville had been selected as part of the Australian team, but ended up not making the trip. I am not sure why – perhaps she felt it better to concentrate on the upcoming IAAF World Championships.

### 1999 Second Federation Carnival, Including Glover Shield 20km Chipping Norton, Sydney, Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> August 1999

Victory in the 1999 Glover Shield went to Adelaide walker **Darren Bown**. His time of 1:27:45 was the third occasion he had broken 90 minutes that year and he would soon be picked up by the AIS and relocate to Canberra. **Luke Adams** took second with 1:29:44, while third place went to U20 national champion **Troy Sundstrom**, still recovering from a bout of chicken pox.

Glover Shield 20km Men, Sydney, Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> August 1999			
1.	Darren Bown	SA	1:27.45
2.	Luke Adams	NSW	1:29.44
3.	Troy Sundstrom	NSW	1:32.59
4.	Douglas Connolly	NSW	1:39.11
5.	Duncan Knox	VIC	1:42.02
6.	Dan Vellis	NSW	1:45.45
7.	Chris Bone	SA	1:48.27
8.	Keith Knox	NSW	1:48.45
9.	Glen Taylor	NSW	1:57.34
10.	Rob Osborne	NSW	1:02.53

### 7<sup>th</sup> World Championships in Athletics Seville, Spain, 20-29 August 1999

The 7<sup>th</sup> World Championships in Athletics were held at the Estadio Olímpico, Seville, Spain, from 20-29 August 1999. A small team of 5 Australian walkers had been selected and they did well, all finishing, and with 3 of them in the top seven in their respective events.

First to the men's 20km where **Nathan Deakes** finished a fine 7<sup>th</sup> with 1:25:26, the times all slow due to the oppressive conditions. **Nick A'Hern** had a rare off day, finishing well back in 26<sup>th</sup> place with 1:38:08.

IAAF World Champs 20km Men, Seville, Sat 21 <sup>st</sup> August 1999			
1.	Ilya Markov	RUS	1:23:34
2.	Jefferson Pérez	ECU	1:24:19
3.	Daniel García	MEX	1:24:31

...			
7.	<b>Nathan Deakes</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:25:26</b>
26.	<b>Nick A'Hern</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:38:08</b>

**Dion Russell** was the sole Australian rep in the men's 50km and he came 12<sup>th</sup> with 3:59:23, a good performance in the heat.

<b>IAAF World Champs 50km Men, Seville, Wed 25<sup>th</sup> August 1999</b>			
1.	Ivano Brugnetti	ITA	3:47:54
2.	Nikolay Matyukhin	RUS	3:48:18
3.	Curt Clausen	USA	3:50:55
...			
12	<b>Dion Russell</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>3:59:23</b>

**Kerry Saxby-Junna** turned back the clock with a huge walk to take the bronze medal in the women's 20km with a time of 1:31:18, while **Jane Saville** also walked excellently to finish 7<sup>th</sup> with 1:32:13. As an indication of the quality of Saxby-Junna's walk, she was the only walker in the entire field to walk faster in Seville than she had done in the 1999 Race Walking World Cup in France earlier in the year.

<b>IAAF World Champs 20km Women, Seville, Friday 27<sup>th</sup> August</b>			
1.	Liu Hongyu	CHN	1:30:50
2.	Wang Yan	CHN	1:30:52
3.	<b>Kerry Saxby-Junna</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:31:18</b>
...			
7	<b>Jane Saville</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:32:13</b>

#### **Australian Long Course Championships Middle Park, Melbourne, Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> September 1999**

It had been a big year for the top walkers and a number of them chose to bypass the Australian Long Course Championships, scheduled only a week after the World Championships. This opened the door for **Duane Cousins**, **Dominic McGrath** and **Shane Pearson** to grab some more silverware for the trophy cabinet. It was a great battle between Cousins and McGrath, with only 37 secs separating them at the end, 2:18:22 to 2:18:59.

<b>Australian 30km Championship, Melbourne, Sun 5<sup>th</sup> Sept 1999</b>			
1.	Duane Cousins	VIC	2:18:22
2.	Dominic McGrath	VIC	2:18:59
3.	Shane Pearson	QLD	2:23:57
4.	Andrew Jamieson	VIC	2:31:20
5.	Richard Everson	SA	2:33:35
6.	Ross Reid	VIC	2:47:23
7.	John Leydon	SA	2:49:57
8.	Robert Osborne	NSW	3:26:01
Teams			
1.	VIC	6 Cousins, McGrath, Jamieson	

#### **1999 Australian 50km Championship and 2000 Olympic 50km Trial Middle Park, Melbourne, Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December 1999**

Three Australians recorded Olympic qualifying performances in the Men's 50km Olympic Trial, held at Albert Park on the morning of Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December 1999. AIS athletes **Dion Russell** and **Nathan Deakes** overcame poor weather conditions to dead-heat for victory in the race, both recording 3:52:53. They pounded the pavement together for the entire race and could not be separated at the finish. This was Deakes' first attempt over 50km and it was an impressive debut. Both walkers had announced their intentions of chasing the 20km/50km double at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games so they would appear again in the 20km trial early the following year.

**Duane Cousins** also clocked an Olympic qualifier, finishing in 3:59:34. While Russell and Deakes were now automatic team selections, the third Olympic 50km spot was at the selectors' discretion. **Dominic McGrath** was forced to start even though he was carrying a hamstring injury. As expected, he could not match Cousins and struggled in fifth place with 4:06:58. Even though McGrath subsequently beat Cousins' time in England in an international 50km race the following month, the selectors ended up awarding the third Olympic spot to Cousins.

<b>Australian 50km Championship, Melbourne, Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> Dec 1999</b>			
E1	Dion Russell	VIC	3:52:53
E1.	Nathan Deakes	VIC	3:52:53
3.	Duane Cousins	VIC	3:57:40
4.	Tony Sargisson	NZL	4:06:58
5.	Dominic McGrath	VIC	4:07:33
9.	Michael Harvey	VIC	4:27:05

## 2000

### **Australian 20km Championship Men, including Olympic 20km Championship Homebush, Sydney, Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2000**

The Olympic 20km racewalking trials were to be contested on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February in Sydney, using the Olympic course. This attracted attention internationally and a number of overseas walkers converged on Sydney on the day to test out the course and get a time on the board.

The men's field size was large, with 29 walkers in total, 8 of them from outside Australia. It was definitely the strongest field ever assembled in Australia and it saw an Australian win when **Nathan Deakes** fought off **Joel Sanchez** of Mexico and **Nick A'Hern** to win in 1:21:47. **Dion Russell** finished 4<sup>th</sup> overall and, as the third Australian finisher, looked likely to also get an Olympic 20km berth alongside Deakes and A'Hern. A'Hern was actually the first to finish, after Deakes and then Sanchez set off mistakenly on an extra lap of the stadium. *"I thought, 'Is there another one to go',"* A'Hern said, *"but I know when enough is enough."*

The men's and women's races started at 8AM, but were still subject to a hot sun and almost 100 per cent humidity. The course, restricted at either end by traffic access requirements, contained an extra 500m-to-600m loop with a U-turn to make it the minimum 2000m required. Ron Weigel, the national walks coach, suggested he would rather see the added loop removed, while Saxby-Junna said the turns were *"shocking on her knee"*.

Deakes and Russell had now qualified for both the 20km and 50km Olympic walks, having tied for first place in the Olympic 50km trial in Melbourne last year. Both intended to compete in both Games walks.

<b>Aust 20km Championship Men, Sydney, Sat 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 2000</b>			
1	Deakes, Nathan	VIC	1:21:47
2	Sanchez, Joel	MEX	1:21:55
3	A'Hern, Nicholas	NSW	1:22:15
4	Russell, Dion	VIC	1:24:09
5	Adams, Luke	NSW	1:25:29
6	Barrett, Craig	NZL	1:26:09
7	Sundstrom, Troy	NSW	1:26:37
8	Perricelli, Giovanni	ITA	1:28:56
9	Vallance, Brent	NSW	1:29:48
10	Brugnetti, Ivano	ITA	1:30:05
11	Murphy, Liam	SA	1:30:34
12	Malcolm, Brad	VIC	1:31:23
13	Bown, Darren	SA	1:31:58
14	Cousins, Duane	VIC	1:32:07
15	Russell, Jarrod	VIC	1:32:21
16	Costin, Jamie	IRL	1:32:48
17	McGrath, Dominic	VIC	1:32:54
18	Harbans Singh, Narinder	MAS	1:34:46

19	Abdul Rahman, Mohd Sharrulh	MAS	1:37:19
20	Donahoo, Mark	VIC	1:39:41
21	Bertei, Frank	VIC	1:40:03
22	Balaysendaram, Thirukumaran	MAS	1:40:10
23	Jamieson, Andrew	VIC	1:43:25
24	Russell, Warren	NSW	1:43:57
25	Knox, Duncan	VIC	1:49:05
26	Reid, Ross	VIC	1:50:06
27	Phillips, Jonathon	WA	1:54:43
28	Maybir, Caleb	QLD	2:02:21
29	Osborne, Robert	NSW	2:02:41

### Australian 20km Championship Women, including Olympic 20km Championship Homebush, Sydney, Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2000

**Jane Saville** walked a personal best time of 1:30:58 to finish third behind Italians Erica Alfridi and Elisabetta Perrone. As leading Australian and having achieved the Olympic A-standard, Saville was now be an automatic selection for Sydney. So, too, was **Kerry Saxby-Junna** who took fourth outright and second Australian place in 1:33:51. Saxby-Junna had just recovered from a knee injury that caused her to take 12 weeks off.

Trials are as much about who comes third as who comes first. Almost certainly taking the final Olympic spot was **Lisa Paolini**, of NSW. A former Irish representative, married to an Italian soccer player and a former resident of the Homebush area, Paolini walked 1:34:35 to follow Saxby-Junna home. Paolini lived in Australia when she finished 18<sup>th</sup> in the 1993 world championships 10km, then decided to adopt Australian citizenship because she could not afford the travel involved in competing for her native country. She missed qualifying to represent Australia at the Atlanta Olympics by 10 days.

Aust 20km Championship Women, Sydney, Sat 26 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2000			
1	Alfridi, Erica	ITA	1:30:06
2	Perrone, Elisabetta	ITA	1:30:36
3	Saville, Jane	NSW	1:30:58
4	Saxby-Junna, Kerry	NSW	1:33:51
5	Paolini, Lisa	NSW	1:34:35
6	Webb, Cheryl	NSW	1:36:14
7	Fang, Yuan Yu	MAS	1:36:14
8	Wolowiec, Simone	VIC	1:40:06
9	Kara-Ali, Lara	SA	1:45:27
10	Muldoon, Wendy	VIC	1:46:10
11	Rosengrave, Tracy	VIC	1:51:22
12	Barrett, Diane	NZL	1:52:44
13	Excell, Kelly	NSW	1:54:57
14	Ferguson, Carolyn	VIC	1:58:16
15	Hay, Shirley	VIC	1:58:28
16	Shorten, Melisa	NSW	2:01:00

### 34<sup>th</sup> Lake Burley Griffin Carnival Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2000

After third placings in 1997 and 1998, **Dion Russell** stormed home to a great win with a time that placed him third overall on the rankings behind Willi Sawall and Craig Barrett. The first 4 placings all went to walkers who subsequently walked in the 2000 Olympics. **Craig Barrett** took second, making a total of 3 firsts and 2 seconds from 5 outings. **Kerry Saxby-Junna** and **Simone Wolowiec** both completed the 20 mile course and both shattered the previous best by any woman walker. In fact, Kerry's 8<sup>th</sup> place and time of 2:41:03 won her the award as the first Veteran to finish the event.

LBG 20 Miles Walk, Canberra, Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> June 2000		
1.	Dion Russell	VRWC 2:21:35

2.	Craig Barrett	NZ	2:25:02
3.	Nick A'Hern	REGAL	2:29:53
4.	Duane Cousins	VRWC	2:35:11
5.	Darren Bown	SA	2:36:00
6.	Brad Malcolm	VRWC	2:39:38
7.	Richard Everson	SA	2:41:08
8.	Kerry Saxby Junna (F)	REGAL	2:41:43
9.	Michael Harvey	VRWC	2:48:08
10.	Luke Adams	REGAL	2:54:30
11.	Simon Baker	VRWC	2:54:44
12.	Simone Wolowiec (F)	VRWC	2:55:14
13.	Peter Bennett	QRWC	2:58:37
14.	Mark Dossetor	ACT	2:59:25
15.	John Leydon	SA	3:00:03
16.	Duncan Knox	VRWC	3:01:53
17.	Keith Knox	NSW	3:08:34
18.	Robert Osborne	NSW	3:20:48
19.	Robin Whyte	ACT	3:21:48
20.	Andrew Blood	VRWC	3:28:55
21.	Daryl Biggin	VRWC	3:30:35
22.	Bill Starr	SA	3:55:20
-	Natalie Saville	REGAL	DNF
-	Lachlan Wilkinson	ACT	DNF
-	Christian Bone	REGAL	DNF
-	Frank Overton	NSW	DNF
Teams			
1	VRWC1	Russell, Cousins, Malcolm	
2	SAAWC	Bown, Everson, Leydon	
3	VRWC2	Harvey, Baker, Wolowiec	

### Australian Long Course Roadwalk Championships Middle Park, Melbourne, Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2000

It's always a matter of timing, and the timing of the Australian 30km Championship was not good, being in the leadup period before the 2000 Olympics. But **Dion Russell** did manage to schedule a start and he was untroubled to win with a good 2:10:02. **Liam Murphy** also walked well for second with 2:16:07. He would soon be picked up by the AIS.

Australian 30km Championship, Melbourne, Sun 6 <sup>th</sup> Aug 2000			
1.	Dion Russell	VIC	2:10:02
2.	Liam Murphy	SA	2:16:07
3.	Richard Everson	SA	2:28:07
4.	Marcus Dwyer	VIC	2:32:43
5.	Andrew Jamieson	VIC	2:35:05
6.	Pradeep Cvhand	FIJ	2:54:22
-	Darren Bown	SA	DQ
-	Paul Kennedy	VIC	DQ
-	John Leydon	SA	DNF

### Second Federation Carnival, including Glover Shield 20km St. Lucia, Brisbane, Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2000

The timing was also bad for the Second Federation Carnival, which all the top walkers bypassed. South Australian **Liam Murphy** improved one place on his previous outing in Melbourne, winning with 1:28:44. Then it was a case of Masters walkers taking the minor medals, with **Andrew Jamieson** and **Peter Bennett** next to finish.

Glover Shield 20km, Brisbane, Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> August 2000			
1.	Liam Murphy	SARWC	1:28:44

2.	Andrew Jamieson	VRWC	1:36:39
3.	Peter Bennett	QRWC	1:41:01
4.	Ignatio Jimenez	QRWC	1:42:16
5.	Warren Russell	NSW	1:45:03
6.	Robert Osborne	NSW	1:49:44
7.	Ian Richardson	QRWC	1:51:17
8.	Andrew Ludwig	QRWC	1:53:13
9.	K Lacey	QRWC	1:54:26
10.	B Coleman	QRWC	1:57:28
11.	Andrew Mitchell	NSW	2:03:04
12.	Caleb Maybir	QRWC	2:05:40
13.	J Schmidt	QRWC	2:10:59
14.	Patrick Sela	QRWC	2:13:14
15.	S Hayward	QRWC	2:14:27
16.	Dick Keatinge	QRWC	2:22:06
17.	K Smith	NSW	2:26:13
Teams			
1.	QRWC	32 pts	P Bennett, I Jimenez, I Richardson
2.	NSW	23 pts	W Russell, R Osborne, A Mitchell
3.	QRWC	18 pts	A Ludwig, K Lacey, B Coleman
4.	QRWC	6 pts	C Maybir, J Schmidt, P Sela

### Games of the XXVII Olympiad Homebush, Sydney, 15<sup>th</sup> September - 1<sup>st</sup> October

The 2000 Olympics was the year's highlight for us Australians, and our family, like many others, made the trip to Sydney to partake of the rarified atmosphere. It was the second time the Summer Olympics were held in Australia, the first being in Melbourne in 1956, but what a different Games this was, with over 10,000 athletes representing their countries in 28 different sports. Further, being held in the pre 9-11 world, it was free of security concerns and was held in a relaxed atmosphere against the beautiful backdrop of Sydney, one of the most liveable cities in the world. It remains my favourite Olympic experience.

As in 1996, the Australian walking team had 7 members and once again it was split between NSW with 4 competitors and Victoria with 3 competitors. The team was very experienced. **Kerry Saxby-Junna** and **Nick A'Hern** were in their third Games while **Jane Saville**, **Dion Russell** and **Duane Cousins** were in their second Games. Only **Lisa Sheradin-Paolini** and **Nathan Deakes** were first time Olympians.

#### 20km Walk Men, Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2000, 12:50 PM

Poland's Robert Korzeniowski was running hot after his 1996 Olympic success. He quickly followed it up with a fine win in the 1996 European Cup 20km in 1:21:46. This was followed by a win in the 50km in the 1997 World Championship in 3:44:46. The next year he won the 1998 European 50km Championship with 3:43:51 but then suffered a rare defeat in the 1998 European Cup 20km (1:20:40) behind Fernandez of Spain who won in 1:20:31. He was then disqualified in the 1999 World Championship 50km while in the leading group and was placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the 1999 World Cup (1:20:52). The question was now – which event would he choose for Sydney? He was amongst the best over both 20km and 50km but there were so many speedy walkers over the shorter distance. World record holder Segura of Mexico looked the best on paper and Perez, although quiet in the intervening 4 years, could not be discounted after his 1996 Olympic Victory.

The program was duly published and it showed Korzeniowski in both walks. The 20km event was first and most interest duly centred on Korzeniowski and Segura. It turned out to be one of the most memorable Olympic events ever but for the wrong reasons. Korzeniowski walked his race from the front and continually pressured the other walkers until, one by one, they fell away in the hot and sunny conditions. Eventually a group of 3 were left – Korzeniowski and the Mexicans Segura and Noe Hernandez. In the final kilometre, Segura made the decisive break and won by 2 seconds from Korzeniowski with Fernandez a further 4 seconds back.

It was not till 15 minutes after the event when Segura was interrupted during a television interview to be informed that he had been disqualified. He had received one warning early in the race. His second warning, of which he apparently

was not aware, came as he left the 2km loop and began accelerating to catch the two leaders as they headed into the Olympic Stadium. His third and fatal call came just 400m before the end of the race.

Korzeniowski was then awarded the gold medal in a time of 1:18:59 (beating the previous best Olympic mark of 1:19:57 set by Czech Jozef Pribilinec in 1988 in Seoul) and Hernandez moved up from third to second. Korzenioswki's 2 km lap splits tell the story of his remarkably even pace (8:00, 7:57, 8:00, 7:58, 8:00, 7:58, 7:51, 7:44, 7:45, 7:52). His race tactic was obvious – start fast and then just get faster and faster!

The Australian men's performances are discussed below.

<b>Olympic 20km Walk Men, Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2000</b>			
1.	Robert Korzeniowski	POL	1:18:59 OR
2.	Noe Hernandez	MEX	1:19:03
3.	Vladimir Andreyev	RUS	1:19:27
	...		
<b>8.</b>	<b>Nathan Deakes</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:21:03</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>Nick A'Hern</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:21:34</b>
<b>25.</b>	<b>Dion Russell</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:25:26</b>

### **Women 20km Walk, Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2000, 10:45AM**

In 1999, the international distance for women had been increased to 20km and all of a sudden there were no clear favourites for the Sydney Olympics. A good 10km walker did not necessarily make a great 20km walker. With only a couple of international events to prepare, the Chinese showed early domination. Liu Hongyu and Wang Yan finished first and second in the 1999 World Championships (1:30:50 and 1:30:52) and then Liu improved her time to 1:27:32 to narrowly win the 1999 World Cup ahead of Fedoskina of Russian (1:27:35) with Wang in fifth place.

The inaugural Olympic 20km event, raced in hot and humid conditions, was unfortunately marred by a series of controversial disqualifications at the front of the field. The pace got quicker and quicker as, one by one, the main protagonists tried to break the others. By the 13km mark, the pack was reduced to 5 walkers – the favourites Liu and Wang of China, Perrone of Italy, Saville of Australia and Platzer of Norway. Soon after, Wang and Platzer dropped behind and Liu, Perrone and Saville were left on their own in front.

Eventually it was Liu who, at 16km, got the critical break and opened up a lead of some 20-30m. But no sooner had she made her break than she was disqualified and the lead returned to Saville and Perrone. Perrone looked the stronger of the twp and eventually made her own decisive break at 17km. But then she was disqualified and she walked off to the side of the track. She was then advised by Italian officials to rejoin the race, RAN to catch up to Saville and then walked for a further 2km alongside her. Saville was visibly upset by this and repeatedly asked bystanders what was going on as she had seen Perrone leave the course. It was almost certainly during this 2km lap that Saville got her third red card. If so, it is a very unfair way to be put out. Perrone should not have been on the course and the officials were at fault for not enforcing her withdrawal. She eventually stopped at about the 19km mark and Saville walked from then on, clearly in the lead, back to the stadium, thinking she had won. I cannot even begin to imagine her utter despair when told in the tunnel into the stadium that she had been disqualified. Yet after the race, she explained to the press, "*that pushing the boundaries of the sport (race walking) to its limit is part of the sport itself and I pushed it too far today.*" Her acceptance of the situation was very gallant and she is to be congratulated on her fine sportsmanship. The official results show Wang taking the gold and Platzer taking the silver.

Disappointingly, this drama somewhat overshadowed the performance of **Kerry Saxby-Junna**, who finished 7<sup>th</sup> with 1:32:02 at 39 years of age! She would go on for one further year before finally retiring in 2001. **Lisa Paolini**, who finished 39<sup>th</sup> with 1:40:57, was also at the end of her career, being 37 years of age. She would retire after these Games.

<b>Olympic Women 20km Walk, Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2000</b>			
1.	Liping Wang	CHN	1:29:05 OR
2.	Kjersti Platzer	NOR	1:29:33
3.	Maria Vasco	ESP	1:30:23
	...		
<b>7.</b>	<b>Kerry Saxby-Junna</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1.32.02</b>
<b>39.</b>	<b>Lisa Paolini</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>1:40:57</b>
-	<b>Jane Saville</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>DQ</b>

## Men 50km Walk, Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September, 8AM

Korzeniowski had already been the favourite to retain his Olympic 50km title but after his 20km victory, he became a dead certainty in most people's eyes. Garcia of Spain and Sanchez of Mexico seemed most likely to challenge. An 8AM start did little to protect competitors from a hot day and, by 9AM, the temperature was nudging 30°C, as the sun beat down on an open course that offered the walkers little protection. Yet the pace was on from the start and a group of 10 walkers gradually asserted their superiority. And what a group it was – Robert Korzeniowski (POL), Valentin Kononen (FIN), Nicolay Matyukhin (RUS), Craig Barratt (NZ), Nathan Deakes (AUS), Jesus Garcia (ESP), Aigars Fadejevs (LAT) and all 3 Mexicans.

As the laps were gradually ticked off, the pace quickened and, one by one, the group shrank as walkers dropped off. Eventually the leading group had dropped to 3 - Korzeniowski, Deakes and Sanchez. At 35km, Deakes finally cracked and that left Korzeniowski and Sanchez who got quicker and quicker until eventually Sanchez cracked at just over 40km. This left Korzeniowski to walk to the finish on his own. He slowed, showing the effects of his amazing race, but maintained a perfect style to the finish. His lap times (23:25, 22:28, 22:12, 21:55, 21:48, 21:42, 21:33, 21:25, 22:11, 23:43) showed a race in which the pace quickened for every 5km split up 40 km.

He became the first walker to win the roadwalk double (20km and 50km at the same Olympics). That, added to his gold medal in the 50km at the 1996 Olympics, made him one of the greatest Olympic walkers of all time. Latvia's Aigars Fadejevs was a surprise in winning the silver, 72 secs behind in 3:43.40. He had dropped off the lead group at about 30km but had powered home as those in front wavered. This came on top of his 14<sup>th</sup> place in the 20km. Mexico's Joel Sanchez, the last walker to fight Korzeniowski for the race lead, took bronze in 3:44.36. He paid the penalty for trying to match Korzeniowski's suicidal pace.

### Olympic Men 50km Walk, Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2000

1.	Robert Korzeniowski	POL	3:42:22
2.	Aigars Fadejevs	LAT	3:43:40
3.	Joel Sanchez Guerrero	MEX	3:44:36
	...		
6.	<b>Nathan Deakes</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>3:47:29</b>
27.	<b>Dion Russell</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>4:02:50</b>
34.	<b>Duane Cousins</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>4:10:43</b>

**Nathan Deakes**, at 22 years of age, and a former World Junior bronze medallist, had been expected to do well. But who could have imagined just how well - his inaugural Olympic walks were wonderful. In the 20km, he finished 8<sup>th</sup> in 1:21:03 and then in the 50km (held in very hot conditions) he finished 6<sup>th</sup> in a PB 3:47:29. What made his 50km walk even more impressive was the aggressive way in which he walked. As Korzeniowski applied the pressure and got faster and faster, only 2 walkers were able to stay with him – Nathan and Sanchez of Mexico. It was not till 35km that Deakes finally cracked with Sanchez dropping off 5km later. Deakes struggled home and dropped a few places, but gave notice that he was something special.

**Dion Russell** had improved steadily since his initial 1996 Olympic appearance. He had also extended his range to include the 50km distance and had won the 1997, 1998 and 1999 50km National titles and reduced his 50km PB to 3:47:34. But, unknown to most, Dion had decided by the end of 1999 that it was time to move on from a full time walking career – there were other priorities that he had to honour. The Sydney Olympics would be his last international event. He continued with his walking preparation but, in terms of training mileage, the 6 months leading up to the Olympics were perhaps the leanest within the preceding 18 months. In Sydney he came 25<sup>th</sup> in the 20km in 1:25:26 and 27<sup>th</sup> in the 50km in 4:02:50. This was followed by the surprise public announcement that he was retiring from the sport. His Sydney performances must be seen in this light and his comment below puts walking as a sport into its proper perspective. It is after all only a sport and it is to be savoured while it can. Eventually other more important priorities emerge and people must make tough decisions.

*At the end of the day, I was in fact very happy with my results in Sydney, even if others had different expectations and were subsequently disappointed.*

It is to Russell's credit that he could make such a decision while he was still at the top of the sport. In retrospect, his times put him amongst our best ever 20km and 50km exponents and his 10 year racewalking career leaves no doubt as to his talent and competitiveness.



**Duane Cousins**, like Dion, also continued on after his 1996 Olympic appearance and won silver in the 1998 Commonwealth Games. But in a surprise move, he resigned his AIS scholarship in April 1999 and returned to his native Bendigo. Without the resources of the AIS to nurture his walking and with a full time job, he still managed 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 50km Olympic Games Trial in December 1999 and his time of 3:59:34 was good enough to guarantee selection. His Olympic walk in Sydney was tough and, in the hot conditions, he could only manage 34<sup>th</sup> in a slow (by his high standards) time of 4:10:43. But he did finish the race, making amends for his DNF 4 years earlier, when he had been directed back into the Olympic stadium one lap too soon.

**Nick A'Hern**, like Russell, would also retire after this Olympics, when he finished 10<sup>th</sup> in the 20km walk with 1:21:34, only 2 places behind Deakes and in yet another top 10 finish. He had won the Australian 5000m track title on 7 occasions, won golds in the 1994 and 1998 Commonwealth Games, finished 4<sup>th</sup> in the 1996 Olympics and represented Australia with pride for 13 years.

### **Australian 50km Championship Middle Park, Melbourne, Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2000**

The Australian 50km Championship in Melbourne in December 2000 was meant to be the trial for the 2001 Race Walking World Cup, until the IAAF announced that the World Cup was being rescheduled to 2002. Athletics Australia subsequently decided that the trial for this 2002 World Cup would now be held in April/May 2001. So all of a sudden the 2000 Australian 50km Championship was no longer a trial. Understandably, walkers then opted to bypass this event and concentrate on the April/May trial.

Consequently, by the entry closing date, there had been only 1 entry received –and that was by a Hungarian walker training in Sydney. AA had to make the difficult decision to cancel the event – the first time ever for an Australian walking championship. In any case, the day proved to be a scorcher with temperatures in the mid thirties and hot gusty northerly winds. If the 50km race had been held on this day, I can confidently predict that there would have been no qualifiers and few, if any finishers.

This did raise the question – when should the Australian 50km championship be held? Many argued that it should be a winter event and be held each year in the August timeframe. As it was, both the men's 20km and 50km championships were held in the summer when the possibility of hot weather made this sort of event a lottery.

The Victorian Walkers Club went ahead with its Christmas walks and a few hardy walkers decided to brave the weather. The results show that times were generally slow, with walkers and officials finding the going tough (I was officiating that day and it was a scorcher). Dominic McGrath won the men's 20km in 1:35:19 and Simone Wolowiec won the women's 20km in an equally slow 1:45:23.