

AUSTRALIAN RACEWALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS MEN: 2005-2008

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 2004.

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Our story continues from 2005.

A.A. has decided to go with the published IAAF World Championship A and B standards rather than impose their own tougher standards on top. This was welcome news and meant a change in strategy that would give the athletes a more realistic chance of selection.

Men 20km Walk	A	1:23.00	B	1:24.30
Men 50km Walk	A	4:00.00	B	4:07.00
Women 20km Walk	A	1:33.30	B	1:38.00

The 20km trials were to be held in conjunction with the Australian 20km roadwalk titles in Sydney in early March, while the 50km trial was to be held in Melbourne in early May.

But first to a couple of telling warmup meets. Nathan Deakes signalled his intentions with a win in 20km walk at the Canberra Telstra A-series at Lake Burley Griffin on Sunday 6th February, his time a scorching 1:19:23. Two weeks later, Luke Adams won the Adelaide Grand Prix event 10,000m track walk 2 weeks with a fast 40:04.

Australian 20km Championships Homebush, Sydney, Sunday 6th March 2005

The Australian 20km Championship course at the Homebush Olympic site was a demanding 2km lap course with sharp turns and rises. To make matters even tougher, the start time was moved forward to 6:45AM because of expected crowds for the Davis Cup tennis. The gun went just as dawn was breaking!

The Saturday had been hot, humid and windy in Sydney but the Sunday morning was cool and more conducive to racing a 20km event. The women started 5 minutes before the men and it was not long before the fields were intermixed, providing a wonderful spectacle.

The women's event was won by defending champion **Jane Saville** with yet another World Championships A qualifier. **Cheryl Webb**, a little down after a recent illness, hung on for second, while **Simone Wolowiec** stormed home to pass **Natalie Saville** and take third. Natalie, although relegated to fourth, also recorded a World Championship B qualifier. **Lyn Ventris**, although giving her younger rivals over 20 years in age, was able to beat the 100 minutes with 1:39:09. **Lisa Grant** took the Under 23 championship with a PB, while Queenslander **Sarah Vardenega** walked her first ever 20km to take second place in that age group.

Australian 20km Women, Sydney, Sunday 6th March 2005				
1.	Saville, Jane	Open	NSW	1:32:49
2.	Webb, Cheryl	Open	NSW	1:35:14
3.	Wolowiec, Simone	Open	VIC	1:35:44
4.	Saville, Natalie	Open	NSW	1:37:08
5.	Ventris, Lyn	Open	WA	1:39:09

6.	Grant, Lisa	U23	NSW	1:42:48
7.	Geisler, Sandra	Open	VIC	1:52:51
8.	Vardanega, Sarah	U23	QLD	1:53:59
9.	Heazlewood, Brian	U23	NSW	1:54:48
10.	Alldis, Christina	Open	NSW	2:00:31
	Woods, Claire	Open	ACT	DNF

Defending champion **Nathan Deakes** produced another impressive walk to win the men's 20km title with 1:19:39. **Luke Adams**, in his first serious hitout since knee surgery late the previous year, showed that he was back in shape with his second place time of 1:21:39. In only his second 20km race, 18-year-old **Adam Rutter's** time of 1:24:46 was a new Australian Junior record and only a matter of seconds outside a World Championships B qualifier. **Darren Bown**, although telling us he was retired and doing next to no training, was also under 85 minutes for fifth place, after he and Rutter had walked side by side for most of the race. **Jared Tallent** went out hard early and passed the half way mark in just over 42 minutes, before slowing in the second half, finishing 5th with 1:27:15. The next places were as for the Canberra A Series race with **Duane Cousins** followed by **Michael McCagh**, **Chris Erickson**, **Tom Barnes** and **Matt Hyland**. It was good to see that nearly all the young walkers did PBs, some by considerable amounts. In a strange quirk of fate, the walkers under 20 years of age (Adam Rutter and Michael McCagh) were not allowed to enter the U23 event and had to contest the open event. That left Jared Tallent, Michael Smith and Kim Mottram to take the medals in that event.

Australian 20km Men, Sydney, Sunday 6 th March 2005				
1.	Deakes, Nathan	Open	AIS	1:19:39
2.	Adams, Luke	Open	AIS	1:21:39
3.	Rutter, Adam	Open	AIS	1:24:46
4.	Bown, Darren	Open	SA	1:24:56
5.	Tallent, Jared	U23	AIS	1:27:15
6.	Cousins, Duane	Open	VIC	1:28:06
7.	McCagh, Michael	Open	AIS	1:28:46
8.	Erickson, Chris	Open	VIC	1:30:28
9.	Barnes, Thomas	Open	VIC	1:31:40
10.	Hyland, Scott	Open	NSW	1:35:52
11.	Smith, Michael	U23	NSW	1:39:43
12.	Jamieson, Andrew	Open	VIC	1:39:44
13.	Hawksworth, Danny	Open	VIC	1:42:17
14.	Rose, Kurt	Open	QLD	1:47:44
15.	Mottrom, Kim	U23	SA	1:55:30

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Olympic Bronze medallist **Nathan Deakes** was announced as the Australian Male Athlete of the Year at the Telstra Athlete of the Year Awards, held at the conclusion of the T&F Championships.

Nathan Deakes, Luke Adams, Jane Saville and Cheryl Webb were all duly announced in the World Championships 20km team.

Nathan Deakes, **Luke Adams** and **Jared Tallent** then travelled to Cixi, China, on Sunday 24th April for the third leg of the 2005 IAAF Race Walking Challenge, looking for good times in what was always a very competitive race. Deakes was dominant, winning with 1:17:33, a time which smashed his four-year-old Oceania record of 1:18:14. It was also a good day for the other Australian competitors, Adams recording a PB of 1:19:30 in finishing 13th and Tallent clocking 1:22:54 to also better the World Championships A-standard. This was a PB by nearly 3 minutes for Tallent and, at 20 years of age, his future looked indeed bright. As expected, Tallent was soon added to the World Championships 20km team.

Australian 50km Championship and World Championships Trial Albert Park, Melbourne, Sunday 1st May 2005

The 2005 Australian 50km championship, held alongside the Victorian title at Albert Park on Sunday 1st May, was the official World Championships trial. The event started at 7:30AM and conditions remained cool and almost ideal throughout the race. **Nathan Deakes**, **Craig Barrett** and **Duane Cousins** lead early from **Chris Erickson** and **Daniel Walters**. By the 22km mark, Deakes had made his break and went on to win comfortably in 3:47:51. His last 20km was the fastest of the race – 1:28:39 – and he finished fresh only a week after his fabulous 20km victory in China.

Barrett broke away from Cousins around the 30km mark and went on to record 3:58:39, a time which guaranteed him selection for New Zealand in their 2005 World Championships team. As Cousins faded, Erickson and then **Darren Bown** caught and passed him and it looked like Erickson and Bown would fight out third spot. When Bown, with only a very limited preparation, faded at around the 40km mark, Erickson was left on his own to bring it home with 4:03:42, a PB by over 10 minutes and a time that pushed him well up the ranking lists. Cousins held on for 4:04:35. Deakes, Erickson and Cousins all broke the 4:05:00 Commonwealth Games A standard so had put themselves in serious contention for the next year's Games in Melbourne.

Australian 50km Championship, Melbourne, Sun 1st May 2005

1.	Nathan Deakes	VIC	3.47.51
2.	Craig Barrett	NZ	3.58.39
3.	Chris Erickson	VIC	4.03.42
4.	Duane Cousins	VIC	4.04.35
5.	Darren Bown	SA	4.07.22
6.	Troy Sundstrom	NSW	4.18.28
-	Daniel Walkers	VIC	DQ

Deakes was added to the World Championships 50km team. Erickson, the next best Australian with 4:03:42, had only the B standard so missed out. His opportunity would come in future years.

39th Lake Burley Griffin Carnival

Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 12th June 2005

Jared Tallent, after 3 years as the leading junior walker and contesting his first senior 20 mile event, was expected to provide stiff opposition for defending champion **Craig Barrett**. Not surprisingly, they broke away from the field almost immediately, passing the 5 mile mark in 35:35. Tallent continued to apply pressure, broke away from Barrett at the 8 mile mark and recorded 35:23 and 34:36 for his next two 5 mile splits to build up a lead of over 4 minutes. The only other 20 year old to do so well on debut was Nathan Deakes in 1998 when he took second place in 2:21:50. At the 18 mile mark, Tallent was still on target to match Deakes' time but he slowed a little in the last few miles to record a winning time of 2:22:39. **Chris Erickson**, walking a very evenly paced race, broke away from the chasing pack, passed Craig Barrett and came home in second place for the second year in a row – but with a time some 10 minutes faster than the previous year. Craig Barrett medalled yet again, making a total of 4 golds, 2 silvers and a bronze from 7 attempts.

LBG 20 Mile Walk, Canberra, Sunday 12th June 2005

1.	Jared Tallent	VRWC	2:22:39
2.	Chris Erickson	VRWC	2:27:04
3.	Craig Barrett	NZL	2:28:24
4.	Duane Cousins	VRWC	2:37:20
5.	Darren Bown	SAAWC	2:39:38
6.	Troy Sundstrom	REGAL	2:42:40
7.	Frank Bertei	VRWC	2:45:50
8.	Andrew Jamieson	VRWC	2:48:24
9.	John Leydon	SAAWC	3:07:11
10.	Peter Bennett	QRWC	3:07:56
11.	Duncan Knox	VRWC	3:34:10
12.	Bill Starr	SAAWC	3:38:39
13.	Jim Hoare	SAAWC	3:52:42
14.	Bob Chapman	ACT	3:52:48
15.	Mark Worrall	ACT	4:00:01
16.	Val Chesterton (F)	ACT	4:24:36
-	Robin Whyte	ACT	DQ
-	Bryan Thomas	ACT	DQ

Teams

1.	VRWC1	33	J Tallent, C Erickson, D Cousins
2.	VRWC2	17	F Bertei, A Jamieson, D Knox
3.	SAAWC1	16	D Bown, J Leydon, B Starr

Nathan Deakes' wins in the Australian 20km and 50km had come at a cost and, in late July he announced that he was withdrawing from the World Championships 20km so that he could allow additional time for a hamstring injury to re-

cover before the World Championships 50km. A week later, he announced that he would also be withdrawing from the 50km. His season was over. He would probably have been the favourite in either or both walks. It was bitter blow.

IAAF World Championships Helsinki, Finland, August 6-14, 2005

The 10th World Championships in Athletics were held in the Olympic Stadium in Helsinki, the site of the first IAAF World Championships in 1983.

Jefferson Perez had won the World Championship 20km in 2003 in Paris. His win in 2005 in Helsinki cemented his place amongst the greatest male walkers ever. The pace was on from the start as his team mate **Rolando Saquipay** went out at what could only be described as a suicidal pace. Although Saquipay paid the price, it set up the win for Perez. **Luke Adams** and **Jared Tallent** both walked well, finishing 10th and 18th. The 21 year old Tallent was starting to make his mark felt.

20km Men, Helsinki, Saturday 6th August 2005			
1.	Jefferson Pérez	ECU	1:18:35
2.	Francisco Javier Fernández	ESP	1:19:36
3.	Juan Manuel Molina	ESP	1:19:44
...			
10.	Luke Adams	AUS	1:21:43
18.	Jared Tallent	AUS	1:23:42

I am disappointed to have to say that the women's 20km was won by former drugs cheat Olimpiada Ivanova of Russia. I firmly believe that if you take performance enhancing drugs, you are forever stronger for the rest of your career. Another blight on our championship landscape! **Jane Saville** and **Cheryl Webb** walked well to finish 20th and 21st.

20km Women, Helsinki, Sunday 7th August 2005			
1.	Olimpiada Ivanova	RUS	1:25:41
2.	Ryta Turava	BLR	1:27:05
3.	Susana Feitor	POR	1:28:44
...			
20.	Jane Saville	AUS	1:33:44
21.	Cheryl Webb	AUS	1:33:58

Summer Universiade Izmir, Turkey, August 11-21, 2005

Australia sent two walkers to the 2005 World University Games, with **Natalie Saville** finishing 5th (1:36:42) and **Lisa Grant** finishing 12th (1:43:39) in the women's 20km.

Australian Roadwalking Championships Mile End, Adelaide, Sunday 28th August 2005

The men's 30km Championship was the first event to get underway in Adelaide on Sunday 28th August, with a 7:30AM start. The 2km course around Santos Stadium was very demanding - 6 turns and 2 rises per lap with a very narrow section which restricted the walkers to single file. Combine that with a sunny warm day with a blustery wind and it was indeed challenging. **Jared Tallent** and **Chris Erickson** reproduced their 1 and 2 placings from the previous year's Australian championship but in times which were some 10 minutes faster! Tallent shot to an early lead while Erickson and **Darren Bown** walked together further back. Tallent had a big break by the 20km mark but Erickson then began the chase, closing to within a couple of minutes by race end. Erickson was in fact one of the very few walkers to record a PB on the day. Bown found the last few kilometres very hard and dropped vital minutes as he struggled to the finish. **Troy Sundstrom** and **Frank Bertei** walked well to also record good times in the conditions. The only other finisher was **John Leydon** who worked hard to make sure he broke the 3 hour mark.

Australian 30km Championship, Adelaide, Sun 28th Aug 2005			
1.	Jared Tallent	VIC	2:12:58
2.	Chris Erickson	VIC	2:15:04
3.	Darren Bown	SA	2:23:59

4.	Troy Sundstrom	NSW	2:26:35
5.	Frank Bertei	VIC	2:30:34
6.	John Leydon	SA	2:57:29

Federation Carnival, including Glover Shield 20km Championship Sydney, Sunday 18th September 2005

The second of the two annual Racewalking Australia carnivals was hosted by the Regal Racewalkers and held in Sydney in September 2005. Windy conditions meant that times were effected overall. **Tom Barnes** led **Troy Sundstrom** for most of the race but Sundstrom was able to finish the stronger of the two and take gold.

1.	Troy Sundstrom	REGAL	1:31.31
2.	Tom Barnes	VIC	1:32.25
3.	Frank Bertei	VIC	1:36.45
4.	Michael Smith	REGAL	1:39.42
5.	Aaron Mellor	NSW	1:41.56
6.	Robin Whyte	ACT	2:03.41
7.	Tony Elms	REGAL	2:08.47
8.	Mark Worrall	ACT	2:10.17
9.	Lachlan Wilkinson	ACT	2:12.22
10.	David Smyth	NSW	2:13.05
11.	Greg Rowe	NSW	2:55.16
12.	Geoff Barker	ACT	2:35.52
-	Brendan Hyde	NSW	DQ
-	Anthony Albanese	NSW	DNF

That concluded the major races for 2005. The focus would now shift to the 2006 Commonwealth Games in March and the IAAF Race Walking World Cup in May.

The A.A. Commonwealth Games selection criteria had been published in early 2005. There would be no specific trials for the marathons or 50km walk. Rather, performances up to the end of November would be considered, with the marathons and 50km walk selections to be announced in the week beginning 2nd December 2005. This date came and went, with no announcements forthcoming. On Thursday 8th December, A.A. send out an email to certain athletes advising that the selection announcement would be delayed by a short period. A week later, effected athletes were rung and briefly advised that the situation had changed again and that their selection or non-selection would now not be announced until February 2006 (one month before the Games). Fourteen athletes had A qualifiers for these events (three in the 50km walk, four in the men's marathon and seven in the women's marathon).

It was yet another poorly handled process of mis-communication by Athletics Australia To compound things further, middle distance runner Craig Mottrom had been pre-selected, putting paid to their argument that everything was on hold until after the 2006 Australian T&F Championships. It sometimes seemed that A.A. only ever put one foot forward so that they could then take one step back.

2006

Australian 20km Championships, including Commonwealth Games and World Cup Trials Homebush, Sydney, Saturday 4th February 2006

An 8AM start for the 2006 Australian 20km Championships, combined with overcast conditions, meant that walkers were spared the worst of the usually hot humid Sydney weather. On the Thursday it had been 39°C, so thank goodness for a bit of luck! The walks also doubled as the Commonwealth Games and Racewalking World Cup trials so were contested by absolutely everyone.

Defending Commonwealth champion **Nathan Deakes** walked his way onto the Commonwealth Games 20km team with a dominant display. Deakes, **Luke Adams** and **Jared Tallent** broke away at the start and were never challenged for the top three placings. Deakes made his winning break just after half-way and went to the line unchallenged in a time of 1:22.13 - importantly under the A-qualifying standard. Adams was second (1:23.07), also an A-qualifier and automatic

selection, with Tallent third in a B qualifying time of 1:25.22. Deakes now looked set to defend his 20km and 50km walk titles in Melbourne. But it nearly did not happen. After finally overcoming a persistent hamstring problem a few months previously, he had slipped and fallen during a training walk in Thredbo two weeks before the trial, injuring his knee. Luckily it was not as bad as first thought and he was able to compete in the Sydney race.

Further down in the field, the other walkers were keenly fighting for the remaining two World Cup places. The following pack was soon reduced to a group of four - **Adam Rutter**, **Duane Cousins**, **Darren Bown** and **Chris Erickson**. Eventually the 19 year old Rutter broke clear to take 4th place in 1:26.51, with **Duane Cousins**, who will be in the 50km Commonwealth Games team, took 5th with 1:27.54.

Australian 20km Men, Sydney, Saturday 4 February 2006

1.	Nathan Deakes	ACT	1:22:13
2.	Luke Adams	NSW	1:23:09
3.	Jared Tallent	AIS	1:25:23
4.	Adam Rutter	AIS	1:26:51
5.	Duane Cousins	VIC	1:27:54
6.	Darren Bown	SA	1:29:31
7.	Chris Erickson	VIC	1:30:30
8.	Thomas Barnes	VIC	1:33:28
9.	Troy Sundstrom	NSW	1:37:07
10.	Danny Hawksworth	VIC	1:39:36
11.	Kim Mottrom	SA	1:39:43
12.	Ashley Colquhoun	ACT	1:44:05
13.	Michael Smith	NSW	1:47:02
-	Michael McCagh	AIS	DNF

In the women's event, **Jane Saville** was just as dominant. Despite making mutterings about retirement following a personally disappointing display in Helsinki, the 2002 Commonwealth Games champion was giving no such indication that she is about to hang up the shoes, even talking about the possibility of continuing on to Beijing following her weekend win. "*After what happened in Helsinki you always question whether it's worth it, but I've put that behind me,*" she said.

Saville recorded an automatic Commonwealth Games spot in winning with 1:33.25, ahead of sister **Natalie Saville** (1:35.25), with **Cheryl Webb** third (1:35.59). As Australians filled the first six places on the Commonwealth rankings, all three looked certain of selection and likely to sweep the medals in Melbourne.

Further back in the field, **Lisa Grant** took out the Under 23 title as well as earning herself a place in the World Cup team with a 75 second PB of 1:36.40. **Kellie Wapshot** continued her outstanding form to take the last spot in the World Cup team with her own PB time of 1:37.22. **Claire Woods** also beat the 1:38.30 World Cup qualifying time with 1:37.42 but looked likely to be the unlucky one who would miss out on an overseas trip.

Australian 20km Women, Sydney, Saturday 4 February 2006

1.	Jane Saville	NSW	1:33:19
2.	Natalie Saville	NSW	1:35:25
3.	Cheryl Webb	NSW	1:35:59
4.	Lisa Grant	NSW	1:36:40
5.	Kellie Wapshott	VIC	1:37:22
6.	Claire Woods	SA	1:37:43
7.	Megan Szirom	VIC	1:39:47
8.	Michelle French	AIS	1:41:19
9.	Laura Johnson	NSW	1:47:15
10.	Claire Bock	QLD	1:50:17
11.	Vanessa Ebejer	NSW	1:54:24
12.	Chloe Jones	NSW	1:56:48
13.	Christina Alldis	NSW	2:03:14
-	Carma Watson	NZL	DNF
-	Simone Wolowiec	VIC	DNF

Deakes and Saville had dominated these championships in recent years. Deakes' win was a record 6th in 7 years (2000-2002, 2004-2006) and Saville's win was also her 6th in 7 years (2000, 2002-2006, equalling the Kerry Saxby Junna 's 6 wins.

The Commonwealth Games walks team was quickly confirmed. Finally the 50km walkers had the tick of approval, some 3 months later than promised by A.A. Well, better late than never!

Mens 20km Walk	Luke Adams (29, NSW)	Nathan Deakes (28, VIC)	Jared Tallent (21, VIC)
Womens 20km Walk	Jane Saville (31, NSW)	Natalie Saville (27, NSW)	Cheryl Webb (29, NSW)
Mens 50km Walk	Duane Cousins (32, VIC)	Nathan Deakes (28, VIC)	Chris Erickson (24, VIC)

XVIII Commonwealth Games Melbourne, 15-26 March 2006

The 2006 Commonwealth Games was the largest sporting event ever staged in Melbourne, eclipsing the 1956 Summer Olympics in terms of the number of teams, athletes, and events. More than 4,000 athletes from 71 Commonwealth Games Associations took part in the event. As in 1956, the Melbourne Cricket Ground was used for the opening and closing ceremonies and for the track athletics. The walks were held in the Docklands area, just on the western edge of the CBD.

Commonwealth Games 20km Walks, Docklands, Monday 20th March 2006

The Docklands course offered maximum viewing opportunities for spectators and allowed them to get up close and personal with the walkers as they swept past. Thousands lined the 2km lap and the atmosphere was one of excitement and cheerful support. The weather was overcast early and even when the sun came out later and the temperature crept towards the mid twenties, a cool onshore breeze provided some relief. Although the course was a fairly technical one with lots of twists and turns, the times were fast and competitors seemed to handle it well.

Australian **Jane Saville** won her third consecutive Commonwealth Games gold medal in the 20km walk, with sister **Natalie Saville** taking silver and fellow Aussie **Cheryl Webb** the bronze. All 3 girls were under Saville's Games record from Manchester. Sri Lanka's Geetha Gallage started the race hard and went to an initial lead in the first lap, followed by the 3 Australians, but she was soon swallowed up by the Australian juggernaut and from then on, it was a succession of gold singlets. The Saville sisters joined cycling sisters Anna and Kerry Meares as the second pair of Australian sisters to take out gold and silver in the same event at these Games.

1.	Jane Saville	AUS	1:32:46
2.	Natalie Saville	AUS	1:33:33
3.	Cheryl Webb	AUS	1:36:03
4.	Nicolene Cronje	RSA	1:38:19
5.	Suzanne Erasmus	RSA	1:40:54
6.	Deepmala L Devi	IND	1:41:54
7.	Johanna Jackson	ENG	1:42:04
8.	Niobe Menendez	ENG	1:47:35
-	Geetha Gallage	SRI	DNF

The men's 20km also saw a clean sweep for Australia. **Nathan Deakes** and **Luke Adams** had gone out fast and the field was well spread before the first lap was even completed. **Jared Tallent** went out more conservatively in a small group which included the Kenyan **David Rotich** (third in Manchester), the Indian Jalan and the English walkers. Such was Deakes' pace that Adams was forced to let him go after only 2km and from then on it was Deakes walking against the clock, powering through the first 10km in 39:36. If anyone thought that he might be taking it easy with a 50km event to follow in only 4 days, he had other plans. His final time of 1:19:55 took over 4 minutes off his Manchester Games record (in fact, the first 3 all broke the Games record). Adams gamely chased Deakes throughout the race and really only lost significant ground in the final laps. His final time of 1:21:38 earned him a second silver medal, matching his Manchester effort. Tallent, the youngest competitor in the field, at the age of 21, soon broke away from the second group and walked the remainder of the race on his own to take third with 1:23.32.

1.	Nathan Deakes	AUS	1:19:55
2.	Luke Adams	AUS	1:21:38
3.	Jared Tallent	AUS	1:23:32
4.	David Rotich	KEN	1:25:42
5.	Parayil Jalan	IND	1:30:43
6.	Daniel King	ENG	1:31:17
7.	Dominic King	ENG	1:32:21

8.	Andrew Penn	ENG	1:32:54
9.	Dip Chand	FIJ	DNF
10.	Abd. Mohd Sharrulhaizy	MAS	DSQ

Commonwealth Games 50km Walk, Docklands, Friday 24th March 2006

The last of the Commonwealth Games walks was completed on the Friday morning at the Docklands in Melbourne. The day was expected to be hot (an expected maximum of 30°C) and, while the 8AM start was some consolation, it was expected to be a torrid affair in the Melbourne sun. Luckily early morning cloud cover and the morning shadows from the surrounding buildings shielded the walkers for the first half of the race but the second half was walked in the sunshine with the temperature quickly rising.

Nathan Deakes did not disappoint, breaking his own Games record by 10 minutes to finish in 3:42:53. He walked with the other walkers for the first couple of laps before heading off on his own, increasing his pace each 10km split right through to the end. The first 10km was the slowest of his race! The battle for the minor medals was fierce with **Craig Barrett**, **Tim Berrett** and **Duane Cousins** pushing each other through the first 20km in 1:32:17. **Chris Erickson** decided to let them go, relying on the second half to sort things out. The early pace took its toll and first Barrett and then Berrett dropped off. That left the 3 Aussies clearly in front, with Deakes leading Cousins and Erickson in hot pursuit. Erickson worked hard to bridge the gap to Cousins and got it down to 20 secs at one stage before Cousins responded and started to increase the gap. But then tragedy for him as he was informed he had been disqualified. This left Erickson in second spot with 5km to go and it looked like it was all over. But the second of the Kiwi walkers, **Tony Sargisson**, was walking an inspired race further back in the field and he had other ideas. Catching Erickson with just over 1 lap to go, he surged past the slowing Australian and powered home to take silver in 3:58:05. His splits were 1:59:59 followed by 1:58:06. He negative split the second half by nearly 2 minutes. Erickson held on gamely for third with 3:58:22. It was the first time under 4 hours for both of them.

Comm Games 20km Men, Melbourne, Mon 20 th Mar 2006			
1.	Nathan Deakes	AUS	3:42:53
2.	Tony Sargisson	NZL	3:58:05
3.	Chris Erickson	AUS	3:58:22
4.	Craig Barrett	NZL	4:02:27
5.	Tim Berrett	CAN	4:08:18
6.	Steve Partingpom	IOM	4:25:39
7.	Abd. Mohd Sharrulhaizy	MAS	5:07:32
-	Charles Arosanyin	NGR	DQ
-	Duane Cousins	AUS	DQ
-	Dip Chand	FIJ	DNS

IAAF Race Walking World Cup La Coruna, Spain, 13-14 May 2006

The Commonwealth Games walkers had 7 weeks in which to prepare for their next challenge with the Racewalking World Cup being held in mid May in La Coruna, Spain. Australia had sent a big team of 19 walkers, 11 from NSW, 5 from VIC, 1 from TAS and 2 from SA. The team was as follows

20km Walk Men	Luke Adams, Nathan Deakes, Jared Tallent, Duane Cousins, Adam Rutter
50km Walk Men	Troy Sundstrom, Darren Bown, Chris Erickson
U20 10km Walk Men	Ian Rayson, Daniel Coleman, Brook Keys
20km Walk Women	Jane Saville, Cheryl Webb, Natalie Saville, Lisa Grant, Kellie Wapshott
U20 10km Walk Women	Fiona Alldis, Tanya Holliday, Susan Knapton

Open Women 20 km walk (88 starters, 71 finishers)

The women's 20km opened proceedings at 4:30PM on the Saturday. In her 21st outing for Australia, **Jane Saville** was superb. After a conservative start, she reached the 10km mark in 44:49, then negative split the race, coming home in 44:16 to finish 7th in 1:29:05 - her third fastest ever. Commonwealth Games medalists **Natalie Saville** and **Cheryl Webb** were the two next scoring members of the Australian team, placing 28th with 1:34.51 and 37th with 1:36.33. Australia's depth was highlighted by strong performances by **Kellie Wapshott** and **Lisa Grant**.

World Cup 20km Women, La Coruna, Saturday 13 th May 2006			
1.	Ryta Turava	BLR	1:26:27

2.	Olimpiada Ivanova	RUS	1:27:26
3.	Irina Petrova	RUS	1:27:46
	...		
7.	Jane Saville	AUS	1:29:05
28.	Natalie Saville	AUS	1:34:51
37.	Cheryl Webb	AUS	1:36:33
38.	Kellie Wapshott	AUS	1:36:49
42.	Lisa Grant	AUS	1:37:40

Open Men 20 km walk (115 starters, 95 finishers)

The 20km men were up next, at 6:30PM and it was a genuine team effort by the Australian men as they walked to silver, the first ever 20km team medal. The team was led home by **Nathan Deakes**, who placed 5th in a time of 1:19.37. He had gone out hard with Spain's Francisco Javier Fernandez, walking at sub 78 minute pace, but after Fernandez pulled away, Deakes found himself in 'no mans land' as, he eventually dropped back to the chasing pack, which he continued with to the finish. **Jared Tallent** capped a magnificent six weeks which included two PBs, a Commonwealth Games medal and now a World Cup team medal. He placed 14th in a time of 1:21.36. The third scoring member of the team was **Luke Adams**, who placed 18th with 1:22.11. Teenager **Adam Rutter** placed 50th with 1:26.54, while **Duane Cousins** clocked 1:27.08, his fastest time in the 20km walk for seven years.

World Cup 20km Men, La Coruna, Saturday 13 th May 2006			
1.	Francisco Javier Fernández	ESP	1:18:31
2.	Jefferson Pérez	ECU	1:19:08
3.	Yucheng Han	CHN	1:19:10
	...		
5.	Nathan Deakes	AUS	1:19:37
14.	Jared Tallent	AUS	1:21:36
18.	Luke Adams	AUS	1:22:11
50.	Adam Rutter	AUS	1:26:54
51.	Duane Cousins	AUS	1:27:08

Junior Men 10 km (60 starters, 54 finishers)

The U20 men rounded out Day 1, with an 8:20PM start time. The young Australian team worked hard but found it tough going on the world stage. **Daniel Coleman** did the best of them with 42nd, followed by **Brook Keys** in 47th place, while **Ian Rayson** was disqualified in the second half of the race after passing the 5km mark in 32nd place.

World Cup U20 10km, La Coruna, Saturday 13 th May 2006			
1	Morozov Sergey	RUS	40:26
2	López Miguel Angel	ESP	41:41
3	Grigoryev Aleksey	RUS	41:52
	...		
42	Coleman Daniel	AUS	47:02
47	Keys Brook	AUS	47:57
-	Rayson Ian	AUS	DQ

Open Men 50 km walk (82 starters, 63 finishers)

The 50km race got underway at 8AM on the Sunday morning and it was Commonwealth Games Bronze medallist **Chris Erickson** who was the standout performer amongst the Australians, with his 26th place. Erickson, who broke four hours for the first time in winning Bronze in Melbourne, backed up that performance with another sub 4 hour effort in Spain, walking 3:59:20. He started conservatively, passing the 15km mark in 48th position. At 25km he had moved up to 37th place and he continued to move through the field to his eventual 26th place. **Darren Bown** and **Troy Sundstrom** started the race with Erickson, but Sundstrom was disqualified at 24km and Bown retired close to the 35km mark with hamstring trouble.

World Cup 50km, La Coruna, Sunday 14 th May 2006			
1.	Nizhegorodov Denis	RUS	3:38:02
2.	Nymark Trond	NOR	3:41:30
3.	Andronov Yuriy	RUS	3:42:38
	...		
26.	Erickson Chris	AUS	3:59:20

-	Bown Darren	AUS	DNF
-	Sundstrom Troy	AUS	DQ

Junior Women 10 km walk (48 starters, 44 finishers)

The U20 women closed out the meet, with their race starting at 1PM. The three Australian girls got off to a fast start and at one stage **Fiona Alldis** was sitting in 8th position and **Tanya Holliday** 10th, with the team 4th midway through the race. Then in the blink of an eye, the two Aussie girls were swamped by their competitors, both dropping back. The third Australian **Susan Knapton** had been disqualified after 3km while Holliday picked up her third red late in the race. That left Alldis as the sole Australian finisher, coming 20th with 50:39.

World Cup U20 10km, La Coruna, Sunday 14th May 2006			
1.	Sokolova Vera	RUS	44:49
2.	Kudryashova Alexandra	RUS	44:52
3.	Chai Xue	CHN	45:04
	...		
20.	Alldis Fiona	AUS	50:39
-	Holliday Tanya	AUS	DQ
-	Knapton Susan	AUS	DQ

Although results were mixed from an Australian perspective, 9 of the 13 senior walkers achieved times qualifying them for the 2007 World Championships - 5 broke the IAAF A standard and 4 broke the IAAF B Standard. Add to that the 20km men's team silver and the top 10 finishes by Deakes and Saville and it was a positive meet overall.

40th Lake Burley Griffin Carnival

Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 11th June 2006

Cold and windy conditions failed to dampen the spirits and competitiveness of nearly 300 racewalkers from all over Australia when they competed in the 40th Lake Burley Griffin Racewalking Carnival on Sunday 11th June. The Mens 20 mile event saw a close battle between Commonwealth Games representatives **Duane Cousins** and **Jared Tallent**. After leading early, Cousins was caught and passed by Tallent soon after the half way mark and it looked like he would have to settle for second place. Surprisingly, Tallent slowed at the Scrivener Dam and surrendered his lead soon afterwards. Cousins stormed home to record his first official LBG win. In 1994 and 1995 he had finished second to NZ walker Craig Barrett but this year he won in his own right in what was a popular victory. His time of 2:32:48 saw him 5 minutes clear of Tallent who strolled home in second place after a month's furlough from training. It was Cousins' 7th sub-2:40 performance in this event. **Tom Barnes**, in his first Canberra appearance, took third place with an impressive time of 2:40:40. The strong Victorian contingent took first and second in the teams event and **Andrew Jamieson** walked a PB time of 2:46:23 to come 5th and take the Veteran's trophy (less than 1 month shy of his 60th birthday).

LBG 20 Mile Walk, Canberra, Sunday 11th June 2006			
1	Duane Cousins	VRWC	2:32:48
2	Jared Tallent	VRWC	2:37:31
3	Tom Barnes	VRWC	2:40:40
4	Troy Sundstrom	REGAL	2:41:52
5	Andrew Jamieson	VRWC	2:46:23
6	Andrew Cross	QRWC	2:50:18
7	Lachlan McDonald	VRWC	3:07:10
9	Peter Bennett	QRWC	3:07:45
9	Duncan Knox	VRWC	3:20:44
10	Robin Whyte	ACFRWC	3:32:36
11	Bryan Thomas	ACFRWC	3:42:31
12	Mark Worrall	ACFRWC	3:48:51
13	Peter Strangman	ACFRWC	3:55:01
14	Val Chesterton (F)	ACFRWC	4:31:34
-	Bill Starr	SAAWC	DQ
Teams			
1.	VRWC1	25	D Cousins, J Tallent, T Barnes
2.	VRWC2	15	A Jamieson, L McDonald, D Knox
3.	ACTRWC	6	R Whyte, B Thomas, M Worrall

Federation Carnival, including Glover Shield 20km Albert Park, Melbourne, Sunday 6th August 2006

Around 150 walkers gathered in Melbourne in early August for the second Racewalking Australia carnival for the year – that was a big size for that particular carnival which had been shrinking in popularity over the years. Conditions were perfect and the flat Albert Park circuit proved conducive to good times, with a huge number of PBs recorded.

Chris Erickson took charge at about the 8km point of the race and was untroubled, going on for a comfortable win with 1:28:24, just a few secs outside his PB. 20 year old AIS walker **Michael McCagh** took second place with 1:29:45 ahead of **Tom Barnes** with 1:31:08. Perhaps the most amazing stat was that of 60 year old **Andrew Jamieson** who took 2 minutes off the world record for his age group with 1:36:15.

1.	ERICKSON, Chris	VRWC	1:28:24
2.	McCAGH, MICHAEL	AIS/WA	1:29:45
2.	BARNES, Tom	VRWC	1:31:08
3.	JAMIESON, Andrew	VRWC	1:36:15
4.	McDONALD, Lachlan	VRWC	1:41:39
5.	HEYWOOD, Colin	VRWC	1:41:44
6.	SMITH, Michael	REGAL	1:49:28
7.	REID, Ross	VRWC	1:53:28
8.	KNOX, Duncan	VRWC	1:55:37
9.	ALBANESE, Anthony	NSWRWC	2:01:47
10.	SMYTH, David	NSWRWC	2:06:15
11.	ROWE, Greg	NSWRWC	2:11:18
12.	MOORE, David	TRWC	2:21:40
-	MARTIN, Travis	VRWC	DNF
-	WHYTE, Robin	ACTRWC	DQ

Australian Roadwalking Championships Hobart, Sunday 27th August 2006

The 2006 Australian Long Walks Championships were held on Sunday 27th August on a demanding course alongside the Derwent River in Hobart. It turned out to be a tough day at the office for all the walkers, with a cold windy day and a tough course that climbed for 700m or so each lap.

Nathan Deakes, contesting the 30km distance for the first time, wanted the national record to complete his set. Although he wasn't fully primed for the event, victory was never in doubt. He took the race out from the beginning and comfortably set a new Australian record of 2:05:06, 53 seconds under David Smith's 20 year old time. 21 year old **Jared Tallent** walked a great race for 25km before slowing slightly in the last 5km, but still did well enough to take second place in 2:13:51, just a minute outside his PB, a fine effort on a tough course. **Chris Erickson** walked yet another PB to take 3rd place in 2:15:00.

1.	Nathan Deakes	VIC	2:05:06
2.	Jared Tallent	VIC	2:13:51
3.	Chris Erickson	VIC	2:15:00
4.	Troy Sundstrom	NSW	2:30:52

2006 Australian 50km Championship Eastern Beach, Geelong, Victoria, Saturday 2nd December 2006

If you weren't in Geelong on the morning of Saturday 2nd December 2006, you missed something of truly awesome significance, when **Nathan Deakes** broke the 50km roadwalk world record by 16 seconds, finishing with 3:35:47. To put this in perspective, consider the following

- The course was not easy. With 16 turns, 5 different surfaces (concrete, boardwalk, carpet, road, and the odd cobblestones), two short sharp inclines per lap and windy conditions that increased throughout the event, it just should not have been possible.

- It was a solo performance. Deakes had lapped the entire field by the 30km mark and walked the whole event on his own.
- At the 40km mark, Deakes was nearly 3 minutes under the record and could have broken it by much more than 16 seconds if he had had any competition to push him during that vital last 10km.

Deakes strode to the lead from the start and his first four 10km splits were around 43:30, 42:30, 42:00 and 42:30. He went through 20km in 1:26:00, through 30km around 2:08:00 and through 40km around 2:50:30. At that stage, he was heading towards 3:33:00! Absolutely extraordinary! Overcome by tears, he fell to the ground after crossing the finish line, his wife and parents rushing in to congratulate the new world record holder.

He had these words to say after the race: *“It’s obviously quite a surprise. I didn’t think I was in that kind of shape. To break a world record is really special. To do at home is even nicer. The best prepared athletes walk fast anywhere. I had a great training camp at altitude in US but the key has been the fact that I have been injury free for the last 6 months. My hamstring has been really good and I’ve been able to get through a lot of work. I’m getting older and it’s getting harder, but right now I’m very very content.”*

Luke Adams went straight into second place from the gun and walked the first 40km on his own until he was forced to slow. He surrendered his position to Jared Tallent and Duane Cousins at around the 42km mark and retired soon after, having spent himself. A group of 6 walkers were together for most of the first 20 km – **Duane Cousins, Jared Tallent, Chris Erickson, Tom Barnes, Frank Bertei** and **Darren Bown**. First Bertei and Bown dropped off and that left 4. Then Barnes, only intending to walk to the 30km mark, increased the pace at the 25km mark. Erickson dropped off soon afterwards, but Cousins and Tallent were up to the task and caught Barnes just before the 30km mark, passed in around 2:21. From then on, it was a battle between the two Victorians as neither would give an inch. Eventually it was Cousins, walking the best race I had ever seen from him, who stormed home to take second in a PB time of 3.53.18 (1 min 17secs better than his previous PB, set in 1994). Tallent, walking his first 50km event, held on well to take third with 3.55.03. the three place getters recorded A qualifiers for the 2007 World champs.

Australian 50km Championship, Geelong, Sat 2nd Dec 2006			
1.	Nathan Deakes	VIC	3:35:47 WR
2.	Duane Cousins	VIC	3:53:19
3.	Jared Tallent	VIC	3:55:08
4.	Darren Bown	SA	4:22:51
5.	Andrew Jamieson	VIC	4:27:40
-	Luke Adams	NSW	DNF
-	Chris Erickson	VIC	DNF
-	Thomas Barnes	VIC	DNF
-	Frank Bertei	VIC	DNF
-	Troy Sundstrom	NSW	DQ

2007

January 2007 saw Victorian walker Chris Erickson taking up an AIS scholarship and eventually joining Nathan Deakes, Luke Adams, Jared Tallent, Adam Rutter and Michael McCagh in Canberra at the end of the summer. It was a fitting reward for his last few years of consistent improvement. He would tain at the AIS alongside Deakes, Adams and Tallent until the program was disappointingly and shortsightedly shut down after the 2012 Olympics.

Australian 20km Championships QEII Stadium, Brisbane, Sunday 11th March 2007

Walkers received a nasty shock when they received their entry confirmation for the 2007 Australian 20km Championships from Athletics Australia in the week leading up to the event. With no explanation as to why, the start time had been changed from 7AM to 8AM. That meant that now walkers had to contend with even hotter conditions in Brisbane, along with a questionable course (undulating, open and unprotected from the sun) around the outside of the QEII stadium. As this was the official selection trial for the 2007 IAAF World Championships, it was a huge shame that more effort has not been put into making sure conditions were optimal for fast walking.

Our concerns proved to be spot on as the walkers wilted under the extreme conditions. According to the weather bureau, the temperature in the shade at 8.00am was 30.60°C and at 9.30am it was 32.50°C, with humidity 71%. Apart from the

ambient temperature, it was the sun that was the killer. Even standing in the sun was like being in a sauna. I can't begin to imagine how the competitors managed to survive. It is lucky that there were no serious collapses during the race.

To add salt to the wound, the race was held on a 1.5km course so that competitors could not even properly judge their pace. Try figuring out your pace when the timing is being given at the finish line which is on the opposite end of the course to the start and the lap is 1.5km. Splits are 750m, 2250m, etc!

This was the first time in many years that a National 20km championship had failed to produce any A or B qualifiers. Given that we had a huge swathe of A and B qualified walkers in the walk fields, this was yet another Athletics Australia debacle. As to AA's claim that this decision was made to suit the majority of competitors, I can categorically state that this was NOT the case. I talked to nearly all of the competitors on Sunday (apart from one) AND DID NOT FIND ONE who had requested a change or who was supportive of the change. Every single one was worried before the event and angry after it and quite a number made their feelings very clear to AA or the race organisers either via emails before the event or via personal comments on the day.

Nathan Deakes was a late scratching. He did not need to contest the race, given his stellar 2006 year. In his absence, **Luke Adams** was an easy winner in the men's race, while **Claire Woods** was an easy winner in the women's race. I have contrasted these times to those from the Canberra A Series 20km walk, contested on 28th January. Note that every walker who walked in Canberra was significantly slower in Brisbane, most by huge amounts!

Open Men 20km			Time	Canberra	Diff
1.	Luke Adams	AIS	1:25:10	1:22:20	2:50
2.	Jared Tallent	AIS	1:30:57	1:21:32	9:25
3.	Adam Rutter	AIS	1:32:13	1:26:43	5:30
4.	Thomas Barnes	VIC	1:34:25	1:29:05	5:20
5.	Darren Bown	SA	1:35:25	1:27:29	7:56
6.	Duane Cousins	VIS	1:36:35	1:28:44	7:51
7.	Michael McCagh	AIS	1:37:18	1:27:35	9:43
8.	Chris Erickson	VIC	1:39:34	1:24:58	14:36
9.	Frank Bertei	VIC	1:43:11	1:34:07	9:04
-	Andrew Cross	QLD	DQ		

Open Women 20km			Time	Canberra	Diff
1.	Claire Woods	SA	1:41:56	1:35:36	6:20
2.	Megan Szirom	VIC	1:46:46	1:39:17	7:29
3.	Laura Johnson	NSW	1:50:54		
4.	Chloe Jones	NSW	2:00:12		
5.	Vanessa Ebejer	NSW	2:04:17		
-	Christina Alldis	NSW	DQ		
-	Cheryl Webb	NSW	DQ		

41st Lake Burley Griffin Carnival Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 10th June 2007

A huge 310 entries ensured that the 41st annual Racewalking Australia LBG carnival was a great success. And as an added bonus, Canberra turned on mild sunny weather – ideal conditions for racing. VRWC and NSWRC had the biggest racing contingents as usual but there was plenty of talent on show from the other participating clubs as well – WARWC, SAAWC, Regal, BRWC, ACTRFC and TARWC – and to top it all off, we had 3 visiting Kiwis to lend an international flavour to the meet.

The absolute highlight had to be the wonderful performance of VRWC/AIS walker **Jared Tallent** who broke Willi Sawall's 1980 20 Mile Course record of 2:16:48. He had announced in the leadup to the race that he intended to attack Sawall's record which had withstood all attempts for so long now that many thought it unbreakable, given the tough nature of the course. Tallent thought otherwise, storming to the front and never slowing. His final time of 2:15:43 took over 1 minute off the record and his 5 mile splits were an amazing 33:43, 34:00, 34:02 and 33:58. It was his second win and beat his previous best time by some 7 minutes. Second was VRWC/AIS fellow walker **Chris Erickson** whose time of 2:24:18 was also a PB by nearly 3 minutes. In third spot was NSW/AIS walker **Adam Rutter** in his inaugural 20 mile walk. Although he had never raced further than 20km before, the 21 year old walker was undaunted by the extra distance and his time of 2:26:33 was one of the best times on record. That made it a clean sweep for the AIS! **Megan Szirom** walked the second fastest time ever by a female entrant with 2:53:01.

LBG 20 Mile Walk, Canberra, Sunday 10th June 2007			
1	Tallent, Jared	VRWC	2:15:43 Record
2	Erickson, Chris	VRWC	2:24:18
3	Rutter, Adam	NSWRW	2:26:23
4	Barnes, Tom	VRWC	2:33:17
5	Sargisson, Tony	NZ	2:38:58
6	Sundstrom, Troy	REGAL	2:41:53
7	Cross, Andrew	QRWC	2:42:18
8	Jamieson, Andrew	VRWC	2:42:27
9	Szirom, Megan (F)	VRWC	2:53:01
10	Bennett, Peter	QRWC	3:13:00
11	Knox, Duncan	VRWC	3:21:09
12	Whyte, Robin	ACTRF	3:29:03
13	Thomas, Bryan	ACTRF	3:49:22
14	Starr, Bill	SAAWC	3:58:16
15	Chesterton, Val (F)	ACTRF	4:24:06
-	Brown, Darren	SAAWC	DNF
Teams			
1.	VRWC1	29	J Tallent, C Erickson, C Barnes
2.	VRWC2	15	A Jamieson, M Szirom, D Knox
3.	ACTRWC	6	R Whyte, B Thomas, V Chesterton

Soon after the LBG Carnival, Athletics Australia announced the 50km walkers to contest the 2007 IAAF World Championships which were to be held at the end of August in Osaka in Japan. They were **Nathan Deakes, Chris Erickson** and **Duane Cousins**. They joined 20km walkers **Luke Adams, Jared Tallent** (and also Nathan Deakes who would do the double) and **Jane Saville**.

Federation Carnival, including the Glover Shield 20km Warradale Army Base, Adelaide, Sunday 29th July 2007

The Second Racewalking Australia Carnival was held at the Warradale Army Base, in the south of Adelaide, and conditions were perfect for good racing. Unfortunately, the Glover Shield attracted only a small field, reduced even further when Chris Erickson was a late withdrawal, with an aggravated shin. **Adam Rutter** won ahead of **Darren Bown**, 1:27:07 to 1:27:30. The other walkers were all much slower.

Glover Shield 20km, Adelaide, Sunday 29th July 2007		
1.	Rutter, Adam	NSW/AIS 1:27:07
2.	Bown, Darren	SARWC 1:27:30
3.	Smith, Michael	REGAL 1:56:20
4.	Albanese, Anthony	NSWRWC 1:57:43
5.	Smith, Ken	REGAL 2:12:30
6.	Hoare, Jim	SARWC 2:17:18
7.	Starr, Bill	SARWC 2:22:36

24th Summer Universiade Games Bangkok, 8-18 August 2007

The 2007 World University Games in Bangkok were held in what could only be described as as sauna like conditions. The two Australians finished their 20km races, but like everyone else, had their times drastically effected. **Claire Woods** finished 14th in the women's walk with 1:45:07, while **Tom Barnes** finished 17th in the men's walk with 1:33:26.

IAAF World Athletics Championships Osaka, Japan, 25th August to 2nd September 2007

Although selected in both the 20km and 50km walks for the IAAF World Championships in Osaka, Nathan Deakes decided to forego the 20km event to concentrate solely on the longer distance. Deakes, who would go in as one of the medal favourites, made up his mind in early July after discussions with his support network.

"I have been thinking for most of the year about concentrating on only the 50km for Osaka, as it poses an amazing opportunity for me," he explained. "I missed the Australian summer season and quite a bit of training out on the road, and then some training again during June, so the decision came quite easily in the end. I still plan to double next year in Beijing and 2007 has always been viewed as a dress rehearsal to learn how my body will handle the oppressive conditions. But although I won't be completing the double this year doesn't mean that Osaka won't be a learning experience."

That left the following walkers

Sunday 26th August 26, 8AM 20km Men Luke Adams (AIS), Jared Tallent (AIS)
 Friday 31st August 31, 8AM 20km Women Jane Saville (NSW)
 Saturday 1st September 1, 7AM 50km Men Nathan Deakes (AIS), Chris Erickson (AIS), Duane Cousins (VIC)

It was hot, hot, hot. The combination of unrelenting high temperatures and humidity made this one of the toughest venues ever for a World Championship meet. The men's marathon on the Saturday had been won in around 2:15, the slowest time for a major championship in many years, and it was even hotter on Sunday, the day of the men's 20km walk. At 8AM when the walk started, it was 32°C and when it finished some 82 minutes later, it was 34°C and rising. With not a cloud in the sky, the conditions were not only super tough – they were dangerous.

Men's 20km Walk, Sunday 26th August, 2007

What an event. I was lucky enough to see all the action roadside. Ecuadorian **Jefferson Perez** clinched an unprecedented hat-trick of world titles with a flawless demonstration of his physical and tactical superiority. The experienced 33-year-old refused to panic when Italian Ivano Brugnetti established a 17-second lead at 10km. Instead Perez chose to bide his time, and his wily approach paid dividends as he made his move on the leader at 13km and eventually ran out a 20-second winner in 1:22:20. Behind him, European champion **Francisco Fernandez** crossed the line second. But the Spaniard, who had pegged back an improbable 15m gap on Tunisian **Hatem Ghoula** in the home straight, was adjudged to have lifted and was disqualified post-race. Ghoula was initially upgraded to the silver medal and became the first African to win a race walking medal at either a World Championship or Olympic Games. The bronze medal was awarded to Mexico's rising star **Eder Sanchez** in 1:23:36.

At 15km, **Jared Tallent** was one of the last 5 left in contention and looked set for a huge finish – he was still walking strongly and did not seem bothered by the hothouse conditions. Alas, he was DQ'd soon after this and had to watch the final laps unfold from the sideline. It must have been a huge disappointment for him after what had been a perfect preparation. But as one Aussie was put out, the other responded magnificently. **Luke Adams**, after falling off the pace early, came through the field strongly to finish 7th with 1:23:52. Adams had come 5th in the 2003 World Champs in Paris and his top ten finish in Osaka showed the depth Australia had in this event, considering the absence of the top Australian Nathan Deakes.

A protest was presented by the Spanish Team concerning the disqualification of Francisco Fernandez. After examining the video of the race and discussing with the Chief Judge, the Jury of Appeal decided unanimously that the mode of progression of the Spanish athlete did not merit a disqualification. The Jury of Appeal in its decision noted that the purpose of Rule 230.3 (a) is to prevent athletes from improving their position in the closing stages of the competition by obviously failing to comply with the mode of progression defined as Race Walking. The appeal of the Spanish Federation was upheld and Fernandez was reinstated.

The view of the jury was apparently that the violation was not extreme enough to warrant this ultimate form of disqualification which was specifically put into place to stop blatant abuses in the final straight. Sadly, this was not the correct decision. Footage of Fernandez shows him clearly and blatantly in violation of the rules and he SHOULD NOT have been reinstated. This remains as a blot on our sport. Ron Daniel was the chief judge for that race and it was he who issued the last-100m disqualification call. In the aftermath of this controversial incident, Daniel wrote an incisive opinion piece labelled An Expanded Understanding of IAAF Rule 230.3a, in which he dissected the rule and made a number of very telling observations. But it was the final section, in which he analysed the final 100m as recorded by the Tokyo Broadcasting System, that was the clincher. Read it for yourself at <http://vrwc.org.au/documents/2007%20Osaka%2020km%20Controversy%20Ron%20Daniels.pdf>.

Men's 20km Walk, Sunday 26 th August, 2007			
1.	Jefferson Perez	ECU	1:22:20
2.	Francisco Javier Fernandez	ESP	1:22:40
3.	Hatem Ghoula	TUN	1:22:40
	...		
7.	Luke Adams	AUS	1:23:52
-	Jared Tallent	AUS	DQ

Women's 20km Walk, Friday 31st August, 2007

The women's 20 km walk ended up being a huge boilder. The pre-race favourite, Ryta Turava of Belarus, announced a few days before the event that she was withdrawing due to personal reasons. That elevated defending champion and world record holder Olympiada Ivanova to favourite but she pulled out after only a couple of laps on the track. Her two young Russian team members, Olga Kaniskina and Tatyana Shemyakina, surged to the front and were never headed. Conditions were overcast and a smattering of rain fell during the event, making it easier going than in the men's 20 km event 5 days before (but it was still hot!). **Jane Saville**, the sole Australian, was disqualified soon after the 10km mark while sitting comfortably in the top 10. It was a disappointment for Saville who had not been disqualified for some years.

Women's 20km Walk, Friday 31 st August, 2007			
1.	Olga Kaniskina	RUS	1:30:09
2.	Tatyana Shemyakina	RUS	1:30:42
3.	Maria Vasco	ESP	1:30:47
	...		
-	Jane Saville	AUS	DQ

Men's 50km Walk, Saturday 1st September, 2007

The 50km provided a wonderful result for Australia, with **Nathan Deakes** winning his first ever World Championship in a commanding walk. Coming on top of his 50km World Record the previous December, it ratified his position as the Number One 50km walker in the world and rocketed him into Olympic favouritism.

The hot conditions were back again with full sun and humid conditions, making it a torrid affair. Chinese walker Chao-hong Yu, a 3:36:06 walker, shot to an early lead which he extended to nearly 1 minute by the 15km mark. Consensus roadside was that it was a suicidal gesture and so it proved as he wilted and was reeled in by the chasing pack soon after 20km. This pack consisted of Russian Vladimir Kanyakin, Deakes, Japanese Juki Yamakazi and Frenchman Yohan Diniz. By 30km, Diniz had dropped off and the lead group was down to 3. Then in a matter of one lap. Diniz forced his way back up to the group and stormed past. Only Deakes could respond and, when he in turn applied pressure, it was Diniz who dropped off the back. Thus Deakes found himself in front at the 35km mark and from then on, it was all engines firing as he strode confidently to victory. Diniz held on for second while Italian walker Alex Schwazer stormed home for a strong third place. There were many casualties and overall, some 40% of the field failed to finish.

Duane Cousins started out hard and was walking in 18th place when he was disqualified at around the 23 km mark. It was a very disappointing result for Duane who had made huge sacrifices to prepare for this event and he was in the best form of his life. **Chris Erickson** walked a much more conservative race, starting back in about 35th place and holding on as those in front of him wilted. He finished 24th in 4:13:00 in what was probably a satisfying result in the tough conditions, especially since he had been managing an inflamed shin for most of the winter and had nearly been ruled out by the team doctor and sent home a week before the race. Luckily, some final treatment allowed him to start and, once started, he was determined to finish.

Men's 50km Walk, Saturday 1 st September, 2007			
1.	Nathan Deakes	AUS	3:43:53
2.	Yohan Diniz	FRA	3:44:22
3.	Alex Schwazer	ITA	3:44:38
	...		
24.	Chris Erickson	AUS	4:13:00
.	Duane Cousins	AUS	DQ

Before the Championships, former Olympic champion Ed Moses had voiced concerns about the extent of doping. Despite these fears, the IAAF announced that only one of the samples taken over the course of the Championships was "suspicious" and required more examination. The governing body refused to elaborate further until more was known, but the French hurdler Naman Keïta admitted to having failed a drug test. The IAAF later confirmed that Keïta had tested positive for testosterone in an out-of-competition test at a training camp, and labelled the World Championships 'drug-free'. We now know that this was the start of the worst period of drug taking that athletics has ever seen. Three of the nine walks medallists - Paquillo Fernández, Alex Schwazer and Olga Kaniskina – would all subsequently test positive, as well as others further down the lists.

Australian Roadwalking Championships

Perth, Sunday 2nd September 2007

With the top echelon of walkers overseas at the 2007 World Championships, the annual Australian 30km Championship in Perth saw only 3 competitors and only one finisher.

Australian 30km Championship, Perth, Sunday 2 nd Sept 2007			
1.	Darren Bown	SA	2:22:18
-	Adam Rutter	NSW	DNF
-	Stephen Anthony	WA	DQ

While the 2008 Olympic qualifying standards had been published long ago, the same could not be said for the 2008 IAAF Race Walking World Cup standards. Athletics Australia did even worse than usual in this case, finally releasing the criteria on 19th November 2007, only 4 weeks before the 50km trial and some 10 months into the qualification period. That would have been grudgingly accepted if the criteria been similar to previous years when the Race Walking World Cup had been seen as a developmental event and the team qualifying standard had been set to maximise the possibility of team selection. For instance, 2006 Race Walking World Cup team qualifying standards had been set at 1:28:30 (20km men), 1:38:30 (20km women), 4:20:00 (50km), 47:00 (U20 men) and 52:00 (U20 women). With those standards, we were able to send a big team of 19 walkers.

Now, the whole philosophy had changed, with Athletics Australia stating that this was an “elite competition primarily for athletes who have established by their current form or past history that they can be competitive at the elite international level.” Gone was any concept of developing our walkers. The team selection standards were now set at 1:24:30 (20km men), 1:38:00 (20km women), 4:07:00 (50km), 44:05 (U20 men) and 49:25 (U20 women).

It remained a challenge to interact positively with Athletics Australia as they constantly changed direction.

2007 Australian 50km Championship and 2008 Olympic Trial Albert Park, Melbourne, Sunday 16th December 2007

The year finished with what was, without a doubt, the most eagerly awaited race on the 2007 Australian walking calendar – the Australian Men's 50km roadwalking championship.

Melbourne turned on great conditions for racing – overcast and cool, with a slight breeze. Proceedings got underway at 7AM with the 50km walkers and then, as the day progressed, other shorter events were held. The crowd grew throughout the morning and by the time the 50km walkers finished just before 11AM, a large group of spectators was on hand to witness what was a sensational finish, as the first 5 walkers all broke the Olympic A qualifying standard of 4:00:00. Add in Nathan Deakes who did not contest the event and the grand total of A qualifiers in this event was now 6. And note that they had all done it in the official trial, the ultimate test of preparation and timing.

Nathan Deakes had an exemption and did not need to race the Olympic trial. That opened the race up for the other walkers and it was **Jared Tallent** who took the bull by the horns, smashing his personal best by more than ten minutes, with a dominant display that stopped the clock at 3:44:45. 20-year-old **Adam Rutter** received an early 21st birthday present, recording 3:52.49 to finish second in his debut attempt at the gruelling 50km distance. Olympic Games 20km nominee **Luke Adams** carved more than 10 minutes off his lifetime best to finish third in 3:53.19, **Duane Cousins** was fourth with 3:55.57 and **Chris Erickson** was 5th with 3:59.02. And a special mention for young Victorian walker **Tom Barnes** whose inaugural 50km time of 4:11:33 was terrific. Tom had only a limited preparation after his World Universities 20km race in August and a lot of overseas travelling.

The winning time was the 11th fastest in the world for 2007 and was a pointer to Tallent's potential to finish inside the top ten in Beijing. Only world record holder Nathan Deakes (3:35.37) and World Cup winner Simon Baker (3:43.13) had gone faster on the Australian all-time list.

Australian 50km Championship, Melbourne, Sun 16 th Dec 2007			
1.	Jared Tallent	AIS/VIC	3:44:45 PB
2.	Adam Rutter	AIS/NSW	3:52:49 PB
3.	Luke Adams	AIS/NSW	3:53:19 PB
4.	Duane Cousins	VIC	3:55:57
5.	Chris Erickson	AIS/VIC	3:59:02
6.	Darren Bown	SA	4:04:06
7.	Tom Barnes	VIC	4:11:33 PB

8. Andrew Jamieson	VIC	4:31:29
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Just to reiterate the Australian 50km depth, with 6 walkers under the 2008 Olympic A qualifying standard of 4:00:00 and one further walker under the B standard of 4:07:00. This was unprecedented.

50km Walk Men	A (4:00.00)	3.43.53	Nathan Deakes (V)	Osaka	JPN	01/09/07
		3:44:45	Jared Tallent (V)	Melbourne	AUS	16/12/07
		3:52:49	Adam Rutter (N)	Melbourne	AUS	16/12/07
		3:53:19	Luke Adams (N)	Melbourne	AUS	16/12/07
		3:55:57	Duane Cousins (V)	Melbourne	AUS	16/12/07
		3:59:02	Chris Erickson (V)	Melbourne	AUS	16/12/07
	B (4:07.00)	4.04.06	Darren Bown (S)	Melbourne	AUS	16/12/07

The year finished on a great note for Nathan Deakes who was crowned as 2007 Athlete of the Year at the Athletics Australia's gala awards function at the Sofitel Melbourne in early December. It was the second time Nathan had been thus recognised, having taken out the coveted award in 2005.

2008

Australian 20km Championships and Olympic Selection Trials Fawkner Park, Melbourne, Saturday 23rd February 2008

Wow, what a day!. A 7:30AM start, a fast course and perfect racing conditions ensured that the 2008 Australian Race-walking Championships would be one to remember – 6 Olympic A Qualifiers and 3 Olympic B qualifiers in an outstanding display that confirmed Australia's position as one of the top walking nations in the world. Add to that the 5 Olympic A qualifiers and 1 Olympic B qualifier in the 50km championship in December 2007 and our depth was at its highest ever standard. And it was all due to the intense atmosphere of the AIS which was now nurturing a stable of wonderful walkers.

First to the men's race. With **Luke Adams** already pre-nominated for the Australian team in the 20km, **Jared Tallent** had the most to gain. After a somewhat pedestrian first kilometre, it was Tallent and Adams who pushed the pace, leaving **Adam Rutter** and **Chris Erickson** to battle for third place. Tallent made a strong move at half way before recording a strong victory with a huge PB time of 1:19:41. Adams finished second in 1:20:32, with Rutter third in a PB 1:21:49. In a high quality event, Erickson finished fourth in a PB 1:23:49.

Fortunately for Nathan Deakes, who missed the trial due to injury, Rutter had already been nominated for the 50km walk and was not seeking selection for the shorter event, leaving the door open for Deakes to fill the remaining place when the final walk team was to be announced following the World Race Walking Cup in May.

Australian 20km Men, Melbourne, Sat 23rd February 2008				
1.	Jared Tallent	AIS/VIC	1:19:41	PB 1:49
2.	Luke Adams	AIS/NSW	1:20:32	
3.	Adam Rutter	AIS/NSW	1:21:49	PB 1:06
4.	Chris Erickson	AIS/VIC	1:23:49	PB 1:09
5.	Duane Cousins	VIS	1:27:47	
6.	Marc Mundell	RSA	1:28:55	
7.	Thomas Barnes	VIC	1:30:21	
8.	Ian Rayson	NSW	1:31:16	
9.	Glenn Burrell	NZL	1:33:14	PB 0:06
10.	Tony Sargisson	NZL	1:37:08	
11.	Andrew Jamieson	VIC	1:38:39	
12.	Stuart Kollmorgen	VIC	1:42:55	
13.	Kim Mottrom	SA	1:47:51	

Like Deakes, Jane Saville missed the women's trial due to injury, although she was on hand to cheer for sister **Natalie Saville**, who was with a group of four walkers that included Great Britain's **Jo Jackson**, South Australian **Claire Woods** and Victorian **Kellie Wapshott**. The quartet was still together at half way, before Jackson eased away, leaving Woods and Wapshott to battle it out for the national title and the coveted automatic Olympic nomination. Woods and

Wapshott duelled over the last lap, with Wapshott coming from behind to take the Australian title in 1:32.57, with Woods next in 1:33.02 - both big PBs. For Wapshott, 26, an osteopath who competed for the Knox Athletics Club in Melbourne before moving to the AIS in 2006, the performance put a sorry run of injuries behind her.

Australian 20km Women, Melbourne, Sat 23rd February 2008				
1.	Jo Jackson	GBR	1:31:40	PB 4:48
2.	Kellie Wapshott	AIS/VIC	1:32:57	PB 2:48
3.	Claire Woods	SA	1:33:02	PB 2:16
4.	Natalie Saville	NSWIS	1:35:10	
5.	Megan Szirom	VIC	1:36:37	PB 0:16
6.	Cheryl Webb	NSWIS	1:38:09	
7.	Jess Heazlewood	NSW	1:41:55	PB 0:56
8.	Bekki Lee*	NSW	1:43:37	PB 1:48
9.	Lynette Bannister	TAS	1:46:43	PB 2:49
-	Michelle French	NSW	DNF	
-	Justijana Roseman	VIC	DNF	
-	Fiona Alldis	NSW	DQ	

At the end of March, Athletics Australia announced the successful walkers who would make up the Australian team for the World Racwalking Cup, to be held on 10-11 May in Cheboksary in Russia.

Men 20km: **Luke Adams (NSW), Nathan Deakes (VIC), Adam Rutter (NSW), Jared Tallent (VIC)**
 Women 20km: **Jane and Natalie Saville (NSW), Kellie Wapshott (VIC), Claire Woods (SA)**
Megan Szirom (VIC)
 Men 50km: **Duane Cousins (VIC), Chris Erickson (VIC)**
 Junior Women 10km: **Nicole Fagan (NSW), Regan Lamble (VIC), Jess Rothwell (VIC)**
 Junior Men 10km: **Daniel Coleman (TAS), Rhydian Cowley (VIC), Brendan Reading (ACT)**
 Team Manager / Coach: Brent Vallance
 Asst Manager / Masseur: Simone Wolowiec
 Physiotherapist: Toby Watson

Overall, there were 17 walkers: 9 VIC, 5 NSW, 1 TAS, 1 SA and 1 ACT. The lack of a 50km team was disappointing. Neither Darren Bown (4:04:06) nor Tom Barnes (4:11:33) were considered.

IAAF Race Walking Challenge Meet Beijing, China, Friday 18th April 2008

Before I move onto the 2008 Racewalking World Cup, there is one further event that deserves a mention, namely the third leg of the 2008 IAAF Race Walking Challenge which took place in Beijing in April. It featured 20km walks for men and women as well as a 50km walk for men. The events doubled as the official Chinese Olympic trials and also gave Beijing a chance to test out the Olympic walk course and officially open the new famous "Bird's Nest" Olympic stadium.

It provided **Jared Tallent** with his his first ever international 20km victory. Competing against a top-class field dominated by members of the Chinese walking powerhouse, Tallent sat in the lead pack for the entire race, quashing any attempts his rivals made at opening up a gap. With 3km to go, the Ballarat walker made his move, holding the lead until he crossed the finish line in 1:20.11. His nearest challenger, Hao Wang of China, was 14 seconds behind in 1:20:25. Behind him, fellow AIS athlete **Chris Erickson** once again destroyed his previous best, slicing 21seconds off to finish 11th in 1:23.29.

Tallent's performance made him the FIRST winner of any event in the new Olympic stadium and his photo was featured in newspapers around the world. Here in Melbourne, his finishing photo was shown on page 2 of the Melbourne Age as well as prominently in the Herald Sun sporting section. It is rarely that a walking performance triggers such a world wide media flurry and I am sure it is something that remains even now as a highlight for him.

23rd IAAF Race Walking World Cup Cheboksary, Russia, 10-11 May 2008

Alas, the best laid plans sometimes go wrong and we saw two late withdrawals from our Australian World Cup team – **Nathan Deakes** had withdrawn from the men's 20km after aggravated an existing injury and Kellie Wapshott had withdrawn from the women's 20km with severe bronchitis. With Deakes' withdrawal from the 20km, Chris Erickson moved down from the 50km event (where there was no Australian team) to bolster our men's 20km team (we had came 2nd in the 20km men's team event in 2006 and were hopeful of another good team performance in Cheboksary).

The 2008 World Cup was the usual huge affair, with 430 walkers from 53 nations.

The men's 20km race saw the Spaniard **Francisco Fernandez** (1:18.15) taking the individual honours and US\$30,000 first prize, ahead of Russian **Valeriy Borchin** (1:18.21). The race unfolded as expected, with **Jared Tallent** in the breakaway pack of six athletes, until his first 10km split of 39:14 took its toll and he fell back through the field. **Luke Adams**, who had also been dropped from the lead pack and was sitting 15th through 10km, battled hard to close the gap. Positioned 11th at the 15km mark, he unleashed a 7:42 final lap, crossing the line in seventh place (1:19.15) to bring Australia's team into contention for the medals. Tallent fought on to record a time of 1:19:48 for 10th place to be Australia's second athlete home. **Chris Erickson**, who had only been switched to the 20km team after the withdrawal of Deakes, improved 11 places after 10km to finish 0th in an 'A' qualifying and PB performance of 1:22:55. Australia's final contender, 21-year-old **Adam Rutter** finished 43rd with 1:24:57. For their efforts, the team (without Nathan Deakes) finished 3rd, a wonderful effort.

Adams (20km), Tallent (20km and 50km) and Rutter (50km) would now continue their preparations for Beijing, whilst Erickson would have to play the waiting game, after putting himself into contention for Olympic selection.

World Cup 20km Walk Men, Saturday 20 th May 2008			
1.	Paquillo Fernández	ESP	1:18:15
2.	Valeriy Borchin	RUS	1:18:21
3.	Eder Sánchez	MEX	1:18:34
...			
7.	Luke Adams	AUS	1:19.15
10.	Jared Tallent	AUS	1:19.48
30.	Chris Erickson	AUS	1:22.55
43.	Adam Rutter	AUS	1:24.57

Day 1 also saw the two U20 walks contested. **Daniel Coleman** (26th - 43.57) and **Rhydian Cowley** (39th - 45.24) produced PB performances in the junior men's 10km walk, while **Brendon Reading** finished 43rd in 46:33.

World Cup U20 10km Men, Saturday 20 th May 2008			
26.	Daniel Coleman	AUS	43.57
39.	Rhydian Cowley	AUS	45.24
43.	Brendan Reading	AUS	46.33

The top Australian performer in the U20 women's 10km walk was Victoria's **Jessica Rothwell**, finishing fifth behind a clean sweep of medals by the host nation, completing the 10km course in 46.44. PB performances from **Nicole Fagan** (49:37) and **Regan Lambie** (49:38) steered the girl's team into fifth position.

World Cup U20 10km Women, Saturday 20 th May 2008			
5.	Jess Rothwell	AUS	46.44
25.	Nicole Fagan	AUS	49.37
26.	Regan Lambie	AUS	49.38

In the women's 20km on the Sunday, **Jane Saville** posted her second Olympic A-qualifier, sending a clear sign to selectors that she had returned to fitness and form after a long lay off due to a hamstring complaint. The Athens bronze medallist withstood a tough final 5km to finish 7th with 1:29:27. The Australian women's team placed fifth overall, with **Claire Woods** (1:35.01) and **Natalie Saville** (1:36.32) coming home in 31st and 37th place respectively.

World Cup 20km Women, Sunday 21 st May 2008			
1.	Olga Kaniskina	RUS	1:25:42
2.	Tatyana Sibileva	RUS	1:26:29
3.	Vera Santos	POR	1:28:17
...			

7.	Jane Saville	AUS	1:29.27
31.	Claire Woods	AUS	1:35.01
37.	Natalie Saville	AUS	1:36.32
-	Megan Szirom	AUS	DNF

In the men's 50km, **Duane Cousins** finished 53rd in 4:15.34. Olympic silver medallist **Denis Nizhegorodov** (3:34:14) collected first prize and rewrote the record books on home soil, bettering Nathan Deakes' existing world record by 1:33.

World Cup 50km Men, Sunday 21st May 2008			
1.	Denis Nizhegorodov	RUS	3:34:14
2.	Alex Schwazer	ITA	3:37:04
3.	Trond Nymark	NOR	3:44:59
	...		
52.	Duane Cousins	AUS	4:15.34

Overall, Russia demonstrated that they would be a force to be reckoned with come Beijing, collecting 15 out of the 20 medals on offer. Of course, we now know it was all drugs fuelled and not real. Sadly, it took the IAAF and WADA and the IOC many years to fully recognise and fix the problem.

In summary, it was a great weekend for the Australians, with 4 top-ten finishes, a teams bronze medal in the men's 20km event and a whole swag of PBs by our walkers.

Following the World Cup, the final two walkers were added to the 2008 Australian Olympic walking team, with **Jane Saville** and **Chris Erickson** earning that ultimate sporting honour. They had both walked superbly in the World Cup, achieving A qualifiers in their respective 20km events.

Of the Olympic Track and Field team of 33 athletes, 8 were now walkers – just on 25%. This was an amazing statistic and illustrated our strength in this, our top event. The Olympic walk selections now read as follows

20km walk Men: **Luke Adams** (31,NSW), **Jared Tallent** (23,VIC) **Chris Erickson** (26,VIC)
50km walk Men: **Nathan Deakes** (30,VIC) **Adam Rutter** (21,NSW) **Jared Tallent** (VIC)
20km walk Women: **Kellie Wapshott** (26,VIC) **Claire Woods** (26,SA) **Jane Saville** (33, NSW)

42nd Lake Burley Griffin Carnival Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 8th June 2008

A record 335 entries made the 2008 carnival the biggest ever, and competitors were treated to mild and sunny conditions. AIS walkers filled the first 3 places, but times were generally slower than in 2007 as the walkers were coming off a long racing period overseas. **Jared Tallent** won for the second year in a row ahead of **Adam Rutter** and **Chris Erickson**.

LBG 20 Mile Walk, Canberra, Sunday 8th June 2008			
1	Tallent, Jared	VRWC	2:20:31
2	Rutter, Adam	NSWRWC	2:25:42
3	Erickson, Chris	VRWC	2:27:08
4	Bown, Darren	SAAWC	2:32:00
5	Barnes, Tom	VRWC	2:32:32
6	Rayson, Ian	REGAL	2:33:12
7	Cross, Andrew	QRWC	2:50:57
8	Jamieson, Andrew	VRWC	2:54:04
9	Jiminez, Iggy	QRWC	2:58:22
10	Bennett, Peter	QRWC	3:05:11
13	Ludwig, Andrew	QRWC	3:19:46
11	Heywood, Colin	ACTRWC	3:07:33
14	Whyte, Robin	ACTRWC	3:31:49
16	Thomas, Bryan	ACTRWC	3:49:36
12	Kollmorgen, Stuart	VRWC	3:18:09
15	Knox, Duncan	VRWC	3:46:46
17	Starr, Bill	SAAWC	3:55:14
18	Osborne, Robert	REGAL	3:57:12

19	Chesterson, Val (F)	ACTRWC	4:42:19
Teams			
1.	VRWC1	34	J Tallent, C Erickson, T Barnes
2.	QRWC	22	A Cross, I Jimenez, P Bennett
3.	VRWC2	14	A Jamieson, S Kollmorgen, D Knox
4.	ACTRWC	9	C Heywood, R Whyte, B Thomas

As the 2008 Olympic Games loomed closer, there was disappointing news, with Nathan Deakes forced to withdraw from the Olympic 50km. Deakes, who had battled chronic hamstring problems for the majority of the past four years, suffered a reoccurrence of the injury at his training base in St Moritz, Switzerland, in July. A subsequent MRI scan revealed a hamstring tear that would require surgery, ending Deakes' Olympic campaign. *“There was no decision to make unfortunately, my body made the decision for me. I have to have surgery to fix it as the hamstring tendon has come away from the bone at the pelvis; it will mean a six to nine month recovery process.”*

Deakes previously had surgery on the hamstring in 2003 but returned to win a bronze medal in the 20km event in Athens. The problem resurfaced in 2005, forcing his withdrawal from the World Championships, but he bounced back to win the 20km and 50km gold medals at the 2006 Commonwealth Games, ahead of his world record performance in Geelong in December 2006 and his World Championships win in Osaka. Deakes had only raced once since Osaka, and that was nearly nine months previously, over 10km in Piacenza, Italy.

Luke Adams now picked up the 50km spot vacated by Nathan Deakes. He and Jared Tallent would do the double.

20 km Men	Luke Adams (1:19:15)	Jared Tallent (1:19:41),	Chris Erickson (1:22:55)
50 km Men	Jared Tallent (3:44:45)	Adam Rutter (3:52:49)	Luke Adams (3:53:19)
20 km Women	Jane Saville (1:29:27)	Kellie Wapshott (1:32:57)	Claire Woods (1:33:02)

The walking world was stunned on Tuesday 5th August when the news broke that 3 leading Russian racewalkers had tested positive for EPO in out of season testing in April. The Reuters article, by Gennardy Fyodorov, read as follows:

MOSCOW Aug 5 (Reuters) - Russian Olympic race walker **Vladimir Kanaikin** has been suspended after failing a dope test, the country's athletics chief said on Tuesday. Kanaikin, 23, was one of the favorites for the gold in the 20km in Beijing after smashing the world record at last year's Grand Prix final in his home town of Saransk, shaving five seconds off the mark. Two other leading Russian walkers, **Viktor Burayev** and **Alexei Voevodin**, who won the 50km bronze at the 2004 Athens Olympics, also tested positive but did not make the team for Beijing.

Kanaikin was a notable absentee from the Olympics, but so were fellow Russians **Sergei Morozov** (the 20km world record holder) and **Igor Yerokhin** (50km). We found out why after the Olympics, with yet another press release

MOSCOW, Sept 23 (Reuters) - Five leading Russian race walkers, including a world record holder, have been banned for doping, the Russian athletics federation (RAF) said on Tuesday. Sergei Morozov, who holds the world record in the 20km walk, Vladimir Kanaikin, Viktor Burayev, Alexei Voevodin and Igor Yerokhin were banned for two years each after testing positive for EPO. "They all had failed a test for EPO and after a hearing by our federation's anti-doping board on Sept. 9, each of the five athletes was banned for two years," RAF secretary general Vladimir Usachyov was quoted as saying by the All Sport news agency.

Of course, the eventual 20km winner, Valeriy Borchin, had already served a one-year ban in 2005 for taking the stimulant ephedrine and was part of the same Russian stable from which these 5 walkers came. More of that later. The whole episode stank of institutionalised drug abuse and the axe should have been immediately taken to Saransk coach Viktor Chegin who also served as Russia's chief race walking coach. We would have to wait a further 8 years for that to happen.

XXIX Olympic Games Beijing, 8-24 August 2009

Olympic 20km Walk Men, Beijing, Saturday 16th August 2008

I was lucky enough to be in Beijing for the 2008 Games and was able to watch all the walks from trackside. First to the men's 20km, where a huge lead pack of some 30 walkers soon formed. As the laps were ticked off, the group reduced in

size until eventually there were 8 walkers left with about 6km to go. The great news for Australia was that both **Jared Tallent** and **Luke Adams** were in this final group of 8 and both were looking good. At around the 15km mark, Russian **Valeriy Borchin** kicked the pace down brutally and the group was almost immediately torn apart. Equadorian **Jefferson Perez** was the only one strong enough to go with him but Tallent was the best of the rest, making that vital break on the other chasers. Thus the final placings were quickly sorted out. Borchin walked an impossible final 5km split of around 18:45 to win with 1:19:01. Perez chased him all the way to take second in 1:19:15 while Tallent, walking the race of his life, held out the other contenders to cross the line in third place with 1:19:42, only one second slower than his lifetime best. His performance matched that of Nathan Deakes and Jane Saville who both won bronze in the 20km walks in Athens 4 years previously.

Luke Adams also walked a fantastic race, finishing sixth, only 15 seconds behind Tallent and also breaking 80 minutes. **Chris Erickson** was gutted to receive a DQ at the 12km mark while in around 30th position. He felt he was walking well and was astonished when confronted by the chief judge and pulled from the course. It was his first ever DQ.

Borchin's win was a controversial one. He had already served a one-year ban in 2005 for taking the stimulant ephedrine and was part of the Russian stable, from which 3 walkers had been banned only a week previously. At that time, his coach Viktor Chegin had admitted that Borchin, as well as Kanaykin, had failed an out-of-competition test in April, testing positive for the blood-booster EPO. However, Borchin dismissed the claims, saying he had not given a positive test and he not trained with or spoken to any of the other Russian walkers. Borchin was allowed to compete and won the gold. It was not explained why Borchin had been allowed to compete – in spite the admittance of a positive test by the Russian Athletics Federation, he did not receive a doping ban and was allowed to keep his medal and continue racing.

The system finally caught up with him on 20th January 2015, when he was disqualified for 8 years starting from 15 October 2012, and all his results between 14 July 2009 and 15 September 2009, between 16 June 2011 and 27 September 2011 as well as between 11 April 2012 and 3 September 2012 (which include two world championship golds) were annulled. On 25 March 2015 the IAAF filed an appeal with the Court of Arbitration in Lausanne, Switzerland, questioning the selective disqualification of the suspension periods of six athletes, including Borchin. On March 24, 2015, the court ruled all of his marks from August 14, 2009 to October 15, 2012 were also disqualified. It all continues to stink to this current day.

Olympic 20km Walk Men, Beijing, Saturday 16th August 2008			
1.	Valeriy Borchin	RUS	1:19:01
2.	Jefferson Pérez	ECU	1:19:15
3.	Jared Tallent	AUS	1:19:42
	...		
6.	Luke Adams	AUS	1:19:57
-	Chris Erickson	AUS	DQ

Olympic 20km Walk Women, Beijing, Thursday 21st August 2008

The contrast could not have been greater. Where the 20km men had to contend with stifling, humid and sunny conditions and a temperature of around 30°C, the 20km women faced cooler temperatures (a top of 21°C was predicted) and continuous rain which was occasionally torrential. 2007 IAAF World champion **Olga Kaniskina** burst from the field, covering the first kilometre in 4:08 – a pace that was an amazing 3 minutes under the world record. No one tried to go with her, such was her speed. Within a few kilometres, she had built her lead to over 30 secs and from then on, it was simply a case of how big a winning margin it would be.

Former World Champion **Ryta Turava** of Belaruse tried to break away from the chasing group and challenge but she eventually faded to a distant 11th. Kaniskina held on to finish in a new Olympic record of 1:26:31 while **Kjersti Plätzer** of Norway came home strongly for second in 1:17:07, just ahead of **Elisa Rigaud** of Italy (1:27:12) and **Hong Liu** of China (1:27:17). It says something for the conditions in that 9 of the first 10 finishers did PBs and four of them set new National records. **Jane Saville** was disappointed with her 20th place and time of 1:31:17. She had battled injuries that year and, for her, it was a case of making the start line and hoping for the best. It was her 4th Olympic appearance. **Claire Woods** equalled her PB in finishing 28th in 1:33:02, while **Kellie Wapshott**, who had battled injuries for most of the year, had to battle hard for her 40th place 1:37:59.

Like Borchin, Kaniskina would eventually be disqualified in 2015, another cog in the Russian drugs system. Again, her ban by RUSADA was selective, allowing her to keep some of her medals. Like Borchin, this was appealed and overturned. It was a case of cheating to the bitter end!

Olympic 20km Women, Beijing, Thursday 21st August 2008			
1.	Olga Kaniskina	RUS	1:26:31

2.	Kjersti Plätzer	NOR	1:27:07
3.	Elisa Rigaud	ITA	1:27:12
	...		
20.	Jane Saville	AUS	1:31:17
28.	Claire Woods	AUS	1:33:02
40.	Kellie Wapshott	AUS	1:37:59

Olympic 50km Walk Men, Beijing, Friday 22nd August 2008

The next day, everyone was back at the Olympic arena for the last of the walks, the men's 50km event. Again, the weather was better than might be expected. The temperature at the 7:30AM start time was around 20°C and, although the sun was out and conditions gradually heated up, it could have been worse!

It was an exciting event to watch as initially Italian **Alex Schwazer** and French champion **Yohan Diniz** made an early break. They were soon caught by the chasing group which included all three Australians, **Jared Tallent**, **Luke Adams** and **Adam Rutter**. As the pack kicked the pace down lap by lap, stragglers dropped off until we were left with an elite group of four – Russian world record holder **Denis Nizhegorodov**, 2007 World silver medallist Schwazer, Chinese **Jainbo Li** and Tallent. The lead swapped as they each tried to force the pace and they looked set to challenge the world record as they recklessly ignored the warm conditions and attacked the course.

Eventually Li dropped and it was a race of three with Schwazer, Nizhegorodov and Tallent in the medal positions and extending their lead all the time. On this occasion, Schwazer proved the strongest and won with 3:37:09 but it was Tallent who outlasted the Russian world record holder to take the silver with a 5 minute PB of 3:39:27. Not since Raylene Boyle won double silver in 1972 had an Australian T&F athlete won two medals at the same Games. Remarkably, the last time an Aussie male won two medals was in 1906, when Nigel Barker claimed bronze in the 100m and 400m. It was also the first time Australia has won a medal in the long walk event. The previous best results were 5th by Bob Gardiner at Tokyo in 1964 and 6th by Ray Smith in Melbourne in 1956.

It was only Tallent's third 50km event and only six days after his bronze medal winning performance in the 20km event. After the 20km walk it was all about recovery. *"I was pretty sore the first few days. I did all the right things, cold plunges, had massages, light stretching and ate heaps. This is my third 50km and both the others were in Australia."*

And what of our other two Aussie walkers? **Luke Adams** was initially selected for the 20km event and was only added to the 50km team when Nathan Deakes withdrew. Hence his training had not been geared towards the longer event but he was still prepared to go out with the lead pack and give it his all. Although he faded mid-race, he rallied strongly towards the end, improving on his mid race position of 14th and eventually finishing 10th, his second top ten placing of these Games. His time of 3:47:45 was outstanding under the circumstances. **Adam Rutter** had been struck down by illness in the lead up to the race and had actually been isolated from the rest of the team to minimise impact to all concerned. He started the race against the recommendation of the team doctor – and fair enough; you don't come to the Olympics to watch from the sidelines! He went with the lead pack for nearly 20km before it all caught up with him and he was forced to withdraw.

Olympic 50km Men, Beijing, Friday 22 nd August 2008			
1.	Alex Schwazer	ITA	03:37:09
2.	Jared Tallent	AUS	03:39:27
3.	Denis Nizhegorodov	RUS	03:40:14
	...		
10.	Luke Adams	AUS	03:47:45
-	Adam Rutter	AUS	DNF

Again, it was a case of a drugs cheat winning gold. Schwazer was eventually banned in 2013, came back in 2016 only to be banned again. Some people don't learn from their mistakes!

Australian Roadwalking Championships Albert Park, Melbourne, Sunday 24th August 2008

For some time, the Australian Roadwalking Championships and the Racewalking Australia Second Federation Carnival had vied for space in a packed winter season and both had suffered as a result – what we normally had were two small carnivals, separated by as little as a couple of weeks. In 2008 The two carnivals were finally combined into one large carnival, held in Melbourne on 24th August and boasting over 200 entries.

Another major change came in with this championship meet. For men, the Australian 30km championship was decommissioned in favour of a second yearly Australian 20km championship. The two 20km championships were now designated Summer and Winter championships. For women, the Australian 10km roadwalk championship was decommissioned in favour of a second 20km championship. Their two 20km championships were now designated as Summer and Winter championships.

Even though our top walkers were still away at the Olympics, the 20km championships were still high quality races, with winners **Tom Barnes** and **Cheryl Webb** rising to the challenge and producing excellent times. Barnes' winning time of 1:26:40 was a PB by over 1 minute. **Ian Rayson** was also in PB mood with his second place time of 1:29:27, under 90 minutes for the first time. In third place was the world's top Masters walker, **Andrew Jamieson**. His time of 1:35:38 broke his own M60 World Record by 16 secs. In the women's 20km event, Webb's winning time of 1:34:58 was her best time since 2004 and showed that she was back on track and chasing further international vests. **Megan Szirom**, although sick, toughed it out for second, also breaking 100 minutes with her time of 1:39:49. We had been expecting a great battle in the women's event with Jess Rothwell on the entry list but a niggly hamstring meant that she sat the race out.

Australian 20km Men, Melbourne, Sun 24th Aug 2008

1.	Thomas Barnes	VRWC	1:26:40
2.	Ian Rayson	REGAL	1:29:27
3.	Andrew Jamieson	VRWC	1:35:38
4.	Colin Heywood	ACTRWC	1:41:16
5.	Stuart Kollmorgen	VRWC	1:45:31
6.	Ralph Bennett	VRWC	1:55:01
7.	Peter Crump	SARWC	1:55:38
8.	Ross Reid	VRWC	1:57:26
9.	Aaron McDonough	VRWC	1:57:43
10.	Garry Hastie	WARWC	1:58:35
11.	Robert Osborne	REGAL	2:09:47
12.	Jim Hoare	SARWC	2:19:47
13.	David Moore	TRWC	2:25:20
-	David Smyth	RWCWA	DNF

Australian 20km Women, Melbourne, Sun 24th Aug 2008

1.	Cheryl Webb	REGAL	1:34:58
2.	Megan Szirom	VRWC	1:39:49
3.	Lynette Bannister	VRWC	1:48:26
4.	Jillian Bonham	NSWRWC	1:55:35
-	Justijana Roseman	VRWC	DNF
-	Erin Taylor	VRWC	DNF

Australian 50km Championship

Fawkner Park, Melbourne, Sunday 14th December 2008

With a huge low pressure dumping rain on Melbourne all weekend, things looked grim for the annual Australian 50km championship. The 2km course was under water and steady rain and dark skies greeted the competitors at the start line at 7AM on the Sunday morning. To be fair, the weather did eventually clear by the half way mark and we were able to gradually sweep the many large puddles off the course but it remained cold, and the wind picked up to just put the icing on the cake from a meteorological perspective. It certainly made it a memorable day!

It did not deter Olympic silver medallist **Jared Tallent** who was out for a 30km hitout and he made his intentions clear, powering through the first 10km in 41:51 and then speeding up to pass the 20km mark in 1:23:10. He slowed slightly in the final 10km to pass the 30km mark in 2:06:33 before calling it quits, well satisfied for so early in his post-Olympic training preparation. Behind him, **Chris Erickson** and **Duane Cousins** were walking together, a familiar sight in recent years. But on this occasion, it was Erickson who proved the stronger, making the vital break soon after the 16km mark. From then on he was never headed as he walked evenly to his second Australian 50km championship win in a PB time of 3:55:30. It easily broke his 3:58+ best time, set in the 2006 Commonwealth Games. For a solo walk, it was an impressive performance and it augured well for the future. Cousins held on well to record 4:00:34, yet another fine performance from a walker who never gave an inch in a race.

Behind them, **Andrew Jamieson**, the 2007 IAAF Masters Athlete of the Year, had his own private goal – to break the one Masters M60 World record had had thus far alluded him. It was perhaps the toughest one in the books, a time of

4:23:29 set by the great German walker Gerhard Weidner in 1993. And break it he did, with a final time of 4:23:16. He now held every M60 World walking record, but I am sure that this was now his favourite one! New Zealanders **Tony Sargisson** (2nd in the 2006 Commonwealth Games) and **David Sim** also contested the event but both were forced to retire mid race.

Australian 50km Championship, Melbourne, Sunday 14th Dec 2008			
1.	Chris Erickson	AIS/VIC	3:55.30 PB
2.	Duane Cousins	VIC	4:00.34
3.	Andrew Jamieson	VIC	4:23.16
-	Tony Sargisson	NZ	DNF
-	David Sim	NZ	DNF
-	Jared Tallent	AIS/VIC	DNF

A week later, initial selections were announced for the 2009 World Athletics Championships. For the 50km event, we would have a team of 4, with Jared Tallent, Luke Adams and Chris Erickson joining reigning world champion Nathan Deakes who was an automatic wildcard entry. In the men's 20km walk, Tallent and Adams had also been confirmed so only one spot remained. All 3 spots remained open for the women's 20km walk.