

AUSTRALIAN RACEWALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS MEN: 2013-2016

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 2012.

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Our story continues from 2013.

Australian 20km Summer Championships Constitution Dock, Hobart, Sunday 24th February 2013

After the 2012 edition of this event in Hobart had been held on the Saturday evening in scorching conditions, 2013 saw the meet rescheduled to the Sunday morning. Even though conditions were very windy, there were lots of PBs, some of them huge! It was once again a case of the Australian walkers stepping up to the plate and performing when it counted. **Jared Tallent** and **Tanya Holliday** ensured their automatic selection for the 2013 IAAF World Championships after dominant winning performances. In an impressive representation of the depth in arguably Australia's strongest event, the gold medal winning duo were joined by **Dane Bird-Smith**, **Luke Adams** and **Cheryl Webb** in posting A Qualifying performances, while **Rachel Tallent**, **Kelly Ruddick** and **Chris Erickson** recorded B Qualifiers.

After a slow first 3km, Tallent broke away from the lead pack of men, widening his gap in the next few laps to move through the half-way point in 40:51, as Bird-Smith and Adams battled it out for second and third place, with Erickson chasing not far behind. Places stayed like that for the second half as Tallent walked to his sixth consecutive Australian Summer 20km title, his time of 1:22:10 some 17 secs clear of Bird-Smith 1:22:27 and Adams 1:23:48.

Australian Summer 20km Men, Hobart, Sun 24th Feb 2013			
1.	Jared Tallent	VIC/AIS	1:22:10
2.	Dane Bird-Smith	QLD	1:22:27
3.	Luke Adams	NSW/AIS	1:23:48
4.	Chris Erickson	VIC	1:25:15
5.	Rhydian Cowley	VIC	1:26:40
6.	Jesse Osborne	VIC	1:29:24
7.	Kim Mottrom	SA	1:31:26
8.	Kyle Malone	NSW	1:31:30
9.	Nick Dewar	QLD	1:32:51
10.	Daniel Coleman	TAS	1:34:11
11.	Brendon Reading	ACT	1:36:58
12.	Justin Hill	SA	1:41:02
13.	Danny Hawksworth	VIC	1:46:37
14.	Simon Evans	VIC	1:49:24
15.	Jason Kozica	VIC	1:49:43
16.	Marc Legentil	FRA	1:49:51
-	Brandon Dewar	QLD	DNF
-	Bradley Simpson	VIC	DQ

-	Ian Rayson	NSW	DQ
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In the women's event, Holliday and **Regan Lamble** led comfortably through the first couple of laps before Lamble stepped off the track. That left Holliday well in front and, from then on, she was never troubled, winning with 1:34:32. Behind her, an intriguing battle unfolded for the minor medals with Webb, Tallent, **Stephanie Stigwood** and Ruddick all in contention. Webb eventually won out, taking second in 1:35:46 ahead of Tallent 1:36:50 and Ruddick 1:36:58.

Australian 20km Women, Hobart, Sun 24th Feb 2012			
1.	Tanya Holliday	SASI	1:34:32
2.	Cheryl Webb	NSW	1:35:46
3.	Rachel Tallent	VIC/AIS	1:36:50
4.	Kelly Ruddick	VIC	1:36:58
5.	Stephanie Stigwood	TAS	1:38:33
6.	Lauren Bourke	NSW	1:46:52
7.	Kirstin Shaw	VIC	1:59:20
8.	Mathilde Lacaze	FRA	2:06:20
-	Beth Alexander	VIC	DNF
-	Regan Lamble	VIC/AIS	DNF

IAAF RW Challenge and Chinese National Championships Taicang, China, Friday 1st - Saturday 2nd March 2013

Special mention should be made of the March 2013 leg of the IAAF Race Walking Challenge Series, held a week later in Taicang, China. The meet saw **Jared Tallent, Regan Lamble, Rachel Tallent, Luke Adams** and **Chris Erickson** all competing with success. First to the 20km races, where all 4 finished in the top 10, against strong international fields - Jared Tallent 3rd with 1:20:41, Luke Adams 10th with 1:24:07, Regan Lamble 6th with 1:34:03 and Rachel Tallent 7th with 1:34:53. But the star of the meet, from an Australian perspective, was Chris Erickson. Chasing a World Championships qualifier, he was the only non-Chinese walker in their National 50km Championship, held the day after the Challenge Races. As the race progressed and those in front of him either slowed or retired, he inched his way up through the field, reaching fourth place by the half way mark and eventually hitting the lead at the 47km point. From there, he came home strongly, crossing the line first in a time of 3:55:25, some 90 secs ahead of the official winner, Niu Wenbin. As Erickson was competing by invitation, he was not able to officially take the title but the win gave him his all important 50km A qualifier. His splits read impressively: 47:18, 47:02, 46:50, 46:55 and 47:20.

Australian Track & Field Championships Sydney Olympic Park Athletic Centre, Homebush, NSW, 11-14 April 2013

The 1998 Australian T&F Championships had been the last ones to include track walks. After a 15 year break, the 5000m walk returned, as an invitational event. The following year, it would return as a fully fledged 10,000m track walk National Championship. 20 year old **Dane Bird-Smith** (9:25.21) and 23 year old **Jess Rothwell** (21:37.81) had strong wins. After his 20km time of 1:22:27 in February, Bird-Smith had quickly come of age as a senior walker.

A.A. 5000m Invitation Walk, Sydney, Saturday 13th April 2013			
1	Dane Bird-Smith	QLD	19:25.21
2	Rhydian Cowley	VIC	20:32.34
3	Tyler Jones	NSW	22:50.24
4	Steven Washburn	NSW	23:21.28
5	Jason Kozica	VIC	23:32.57
6	Danny Hawksworth	VIC	24:08.04
7	Kyle Bird	VIC	24:52.32
-	Brad Aiton	QLD	DQ
-	Carl Gibbons	NSW	DNF

A.A. 5000m Invitation Walk, Sydney, Saturday 13th April 2013			
1.	Rothwell, Jessica	VIC	21:37.81
2.	Pickles, Jessica	QLD	23:18.91
3.	Stigwood, Stephanie	TAS	23:24.42

4.	Klein, Kirsty	NSW	24:05.07
5.	Bourke, Lauren	NSW	24:10.63
6.	Alexander, Beth	VIC	24:54.64
7.	Cobb, Jessica	NSW	25:53.10
8.	Southern, Shay	NSW	27:12.15
-	Porley, Tabitha	NSW	DNF
-	Webb, Cheryl	NSW	DNF

47th Lake Burley Griffin Carnival Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 9th June 2013

The 47th Lake Burley Griffin Racewalking Carnival was a huge success in every way - big fields (over 200 walkers all together), exciting races, great performances and good weather - it was foggy and cool in the morning but cleared to a fine sunny day.

Jared Tallent, Chris Erickson and Ian Rayson put on a great performance in the blue riband 20 Mile event around the lake. Rayson led out and held a 30 sec advantage at halfway before being reeled in first by Erickson and then by Tallent. The final times show just how close they were at the finish - Tallent 2:20:42, Erickson 2:21:12 (PB) and Rayson 2:22:20 (PB). It was Tallent's seventh win in a row and his 8th overall, equalling Willi Sawall's win record. PB times for Erickson and Rayson propelled them up the all-time lists for this prestigious event.

LBG 20 Mile, Canberra, Sunday 9 th June 2013			
1.	Jared Tallent	RWV	2:20:42
2.	Chris Erickson	RWV	2:21:12
3.	Ian Rayson	REGAL	2:22:20
4.	Kim Mottrom	SARWC	2:37:59
5.	Bradley Simpson	RWV	2:49:17
6.	Peter Crump	SARWC	3:01:27
7.	Terry O'Neill	RWV	3:29:26
8.	Robin Whyte	ACTW	3:37:12
9.	Karen O'Neill (F)	RWV	3:51:00
10.	Robert Osborne	REGAL	3:55:56
11.	Bill Starr	SARWC	4:02:05
-	Andrew Jamieson	RWV	DNF
-	Regan Lamble	RWV	DNF

The Australian team for the 2013 World Championships was announced in early July. It was a young team with all except Jared Tallent and Chris Erickson aged 25 or below.

20km Men	Dane Bird-Smith (QLD, 21, 1:22:03)	Rhydian Cowley (VIC, 23, 1:24:23)	
20km Women	Tanya Holliday (SA, 24, 1:31:28)	Regan Lamble (VIC, 22, 1:30:03)	Jess Rothwell (VIC, 24, 1:30:25)
50km	Jared Tallent (VIC, 28, 3:36:53)	Chris Erickson (VIC, 31, 3:51:57)	Ian Rayson (NSW, 25, 3:57:55)

27th Summer Universiade Kazan, Russia, 6-17 July 2013

The World University Games, held in Kazan, Russia, saw no male Australian walking representatives. The women's 20km was a disappointing race for the two Australian representatives, with **Stephanie Stigwood** finishing 16th with 1:45:05 and **Rachel Tallent** retiring at the 10km mark.

14th IAAF World Championships in Athletics Moscow, Russia, 10-18 August 2013

The walks, held on a 2km circuit around the Luzhniki Stadium and surrounding Moscow streets, only attracted small crowds. This was part of a bigger concern. It is fair to say the Moscovites did not embrace the World Championships overall. While the walks were a showcase of "Russian excellence", the Russians subsequently lost 3 of their 4 medals

due to drugs busts. What with further drugs related disqualifications in other events, it was in retrospect yet another shocking Russian revelation.

IAAF World Championships 20km Men, Sunday 11th August, 5PM

The first of the walks was held on the Sunday afternoon in hot conditions, and the lack of shade took its toll on the field. 20 year Russian Aleksandr Ivanov scored a surprise win - isn't it amazing what drugs can do for you. WADA eventually caught up with him years later in 2019. Once he was removed from the results, the real winner was **Ding Chen** of China, with 1:20:58. The two Australian representatives had vastly different races. **Dane Bird-Smith** was one of the many young walkers to excel, finishing 10th in his first World Championships appearance with 1:23:06 but **Rhydian Cowley** had a horror walk, dropping off the pace and finishing well back with 1:33:35.

World Champs 20km Men, Moscow, Sun 11 th August 2013			
1.	Ding Chen	CHN	1:21:09
2.	Miguel Angel Lopez	ESP	1:21:21
3.	Joao Vieira	POR	1:22:05
...			
10.	Dane Bird-Smith	AUS	1:23:06
50.	Rhydian Cowley	AUS	1:33:35

IAAF World Championships 20km Women, Tuesday 13th August, 9:35AM

In a dramatic and slightly chaotic finale to the Women's 20km walk, Elena Lashmanova led home a Russian one-two to add the World title to the Olympic title she had won in London the previous year. This was Lashmanova's last international medal. She would finally test positive the following year, but one can ask whether she was ever clean, based on the stats. Second placed Anisya Kirdyapkina was eventually caught up with in 2019 and stripped of this medal. Thus the silver went to **Hong Liu** and the bronze to **Huanhuan Sun**. It was a tough day in the office for the Australians. **Regan Lamble** did not even make it to the start line, having been sick for several weeks and returning to Australia a few days before the race. **Tanya Holliday** was our first finisher with 1:35:18 (42nd) while **Jess Rothwell** finished with 1:38:03 for 51st place.

World Champs 20km Women, Moscow, Tues 13 th August 2013			
1.	Yelena Lashmanova	RUS	1:27:08
2.	Hong Liu	CHN	1:28:10
3.	Huanhuan Sun	CHN	1:28:32
..			
42.	Tanya Holliday	AUS	1:35:18
51.	Jess Rothwell	AUS	1:38:03

IAAF World Championships 50km Men, Wednesday 14th August, 8:30AM

Ireland's **Robert Heffernan** cast aside a history of fourth-place finishes and broke a 30-year Irish men's gold medal drought when he won the 50km walk in Moscow. The 35 year old Heffernan crossed the finish inside the Luzhniki Stadium in 3:37:56, just over a minute clear of Russia's Mikhail Ryzhov who was subsequently stripped of his medal in 2015. **Jared Tallent** took the bronze medal with 3:40:03 but was eventually upgraded to silver, while **Ihor Hlavan** of the Ukraine took bronze with 3:40:39. Tallent's race was not all plain sailing as he had struggled mid race and dropped as far back as seventh place at one stage after leading early. *"I felt absolutely terrible out there early, and at the 15-kilometre mark when I dropped off the Russians I didn't think I would finish. I was really hurting, surprisingly sluggish. As the race went on I tried to get motivated, and I started to feel a bit better as the race went on. I was proud that I could pull together a strong last ten kilometres to come into the bronze medal position. I have trained all year for this, we train all year for one event and I didn't want to let anyone down. It's great to win a medal and have reward for all the hard work."*

Chris Erickson was the next best-placed Australian in a career best walk. Back in 25th place at the half way mark, he stepped up his pace in the last 4 laps to enter the stadium in 15th position and cross in a new PB 3:49:41. *"That was great. I fulfilled my ambition of sitting on the shoulder of Jesus Garcia who has done this event at a world event a crazy amount of times and was able to go with him past some of the other guys. Plus I've finished in the top-16 and have a new personal best which is great, The 50km event is my event. I want to keep improving from here and hopefully be someone that challenges for a top-eight in Rio. The next three years is about getting better, and I think I have potential for a strong performance at the IAAF World Walk Cup next year and keep moving up the ranks from there."*

Alas, while Tallent and Erickson had top races, **Ian Rayson**, who came into the event in career best form, was disqualified at the 12km mark.

World Champs 50km Men, Moscow, Wed 14th August 2013			
1.	Robert Heffernan	IRL	3:37:56
2.	Jared Tallent	AUS	3:40:03
3.	Ihor Hlavan	UKR	3:40:39
	...		
15.	Chris Erickson	AUS	3:49:41
-	Ian Rayson	AUS	DQ

Australian Winter Roadwalk Championships Symmons Plains, Launceston, Tasmania, Sunday 1st September 2013

The annual RWA/AA Roadwalk Championships, held in Tasmania in 2013, saw good conditions for the early races but, as the day progressed, the wind became very strong, making racing a very tough endeavour for the later races. The Open 20km championships were won by **Dane Bird-Smith** (1:25:43) and **Kelly Ruddick** (1:33:15). **Brendon Reading** finished strongly to take second in the men's race with 1:27:51, his best finish for some time. Fellow Moscow walker **Rhydian Cowley** had to be content with third place in 1:29:31 in what was perhaps an anticlimactic walk after the Worlds. In the women's race, Ruddick walked with fellow Victorian **Rachel Tallent** for the first 8km before clearing away for an easy win. Tallent held on for second with 1:38:06 and **Lauren Bourke** took third with 1:43:40.

Australian 20km Winter Champ, Hobart, Sun 1st Sept 2013			
1.	Dane Bird-Smith	QLD	1:25:43
2.	Brendon Reading	ACT	1:27:51
3.	Rhydian Cowley	VIC	1:29:31
4.	Nicholas Dewar	QLD	1:31:01
5.	Kim Mottrom	SA	1:31:14
6.	Kyle Malone	NSW	1:31:56
7.	Brandon Dewar	QLD	1:32:30
8.	Justin Hill	SA	1:37:53
9.	Dean Nipperess	QLD	1:46:28
10.	Jason Kozica	VIC	1:52:04
11.	Anthony Albanese	NSW	1:59:43
-	Bradley Simpson	VIC	DQ

Australian 20km Winter Champ, Hobart, Sun 1st Sept 2013			
1.	Kelly Ruddick	VIC	1:33:15
2.	Rachel Tallent	VIC	1:38:06
3.	Lauren Bourke	NSW	1:43:40
4.	Natalie Laurie	VIC	1:46:47
5.	Sarah Brennan	VIC	1:52:04
-	Michelle Laufer	VIC	DNF

Australian 50km RoadWalk Championship Fawkner Park, Melbourne, Sunday 15th December 2013

With Jared Tallent and Chris Erickson having walked so well at the 2013 World Championships, they had no need to contest the annual Australian 50km Championship in Melbourne in December 2013. That meant it was the smallest field in many years, with **Ian Rayson** expected to win easily. At the 20km mark (1:37:24), Rayson held a lead of almost eight minutes on **Kim Mottrom** (1:45:10) and continued to build his lead until disqualified near the 35km mark. That left Mottrom, the only other walker of the two-person field, walking solo for the rest of the race to take the win with 4:28:15. He had been wanting a faster time but a troubling hamstring had impeded his progress. But, as this was the official Selection Trial for the 2014 IAAF World Race Walking Cup, he still looked to have secured a spot in the team. In fact, in early February 2014, he was officially named in the team.

At the end of March 2014, Mottrom announced that he had tested positive for a masking agent called Dextran, a form of sugar that is often used in diet foods as a substitute for sugar. The morning of the race, he had eaten 2 protein bars with dextran as an ingredient, not knowing this would be an issue. This was devastating news and illustrated how easy it was to be caught out by supplements or food stuffs that are a bit out of the ordinary. Alas, he got no help whatsoever from Athletics Australia and, although he took the case to CAS, he was eventually found guilty and banned for 2 years. Thus the result now reads like this.

Australian 50km Championship, Melbourne, Sun 15th Dec 2013		
-	Kim Mottrom	SA DQ
-	Ian Rayson	NSW DQ

2014

Australian Summer 20km Championships Constitution Dock, Hobart, Tasmania, Sunday 2nd February 2014

The Australian Summer 20km roadwalk champs, which were held as usual on the Sunday morning in Hobart, also doubled as Oceania Championships and as the official Australian World Cup trials. To round out what was a big morning's racing, the carnival also featured the biennial Oceania Racewalking Challenge, an Australia vs New Zealand challenge event contested every second year.

First to the men's 20km championship, which was a great race but which ended in rather controversial circumstances. The race pace was quite slow early (8:48 first lap) as a large lead group formed. As expected after such a conservative start, the pace gradually quickened over the next few laps as **Chris Erickson** took up the role of pacemaker. By 6km, only **Dane Bird-Smith**, **Jared Tallent** and **Rhydian Cowley** were still there with him. The group was down to 3 by the time that Erickson, Tallent and Bird-Smith passed the half way mark (42:43). At that stage, Tallent surged to the front and put in a sub 8 minute lap, with Bird-Smith on his shoulder, Erickson now dropping back. Tallent continued to apply the pressure and eventually, with around 3km to go, the vital break occurred, allowing him to cross the finish line in 1:22:34, with Bird-Smith 5 secs in arrears. Both walkers had walked under 40 minutes for their second 10km, an indication of just how hard they had come home. Tallent was soon advised that a third red card had been put in against him in the final lap and so he was disqualified, meaning that the title now went to Bird-Smith. And this is where it got interesting. Never before had I seen so many red cards recorded in this standard of meet. The pile was so big that at one stage it looked like the DQ board would fill and the recorders would be looking for a second one! It was just lucky that the cards were so well shared out amongst all the walkers or we might have had many more DQs than we saw. I was not impressed! To get to this standard, you have to be a good walker. I could see no possible justification for the huge number of reds submitted and I hoped that this would be reviewed to ensure that in future championship meets, the judging was more in line with international expectations and standards.

Erickson walked strongly to take second in 1:25:23 ahead of Cowley 1:26:49 and **Adam Rutter** 1:27:31, the first 4 all bettering the Australian World Cup standard of 1:28:00. We had thought that Rutter had retired after the 2012 Olympics but the sport had lured him back again.

Australian 20km Championship, Hobart, Sunday 2nd Feb 2014			
1.	Dane Bird-Smith	QLD	1:22:39
2.	Chris Erickson	VIC	1:25:23
3.	Rhydian Cowley	VIC	1:26:49
4.	Adam Rutter	NSW	1:27:31
5.	Nick Dewar	QLD	1:29:29
6.	Kyle Malone	NSW	1:31:04
7.	Kim Mottrom	SA	1:31:23
8.	Brendon Reading	ACT	1:35:39
9.	Brandon Dewar	QLD	1:36:50
10.	Steven Washburn	NSW	1:39:44
11.	Dean Nipperess	QLD	1:41:41
12.	Justin Hill	SA	1:45:33
13.	Mike Morresey	NZL	1:52:21
-	Jared Tallent	SA	DQ
-	Ian Rayson	NSW	DQ

-	Bradley Simpson	VIC	DQ
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The women's race was one of changing fortunes. Like the men, the opening lap was very slow (around 9:45) as a large group formed. A rejuvenated and super fit looking **Nicole Fagan** was right up there with them and doing a lot of the lead work, along with **Rachel Tallent** and **Tanya Holliday**. By the time the halfway mark was reached in 47:55, the lead pack had been reduced in size to our two top ranked women - **Kelly Ruddick** and Holliday, with Tallent a few seconds behind and with the others stretched out behind them in ones and twos. Side by side, Ruddick and Holliday ticked off the remaining laps until, around the 16km mark, Holliday had what looked like a winning break. But Ruddick was not to be denied and worked her way back and then passed her as they entered the final 2km lap. Sensationally, Holliday was then flagged off the course by the chief judge, having taken a third red card, so it was left to Ruddick to come home for her second National Open Championship. Her time of 1:34:44 guaranteed her a World Cup spot - at 40 years of age! **Stephanie Stigwood** held on well to take second in a PB time of 1:37:39 but Fagan, who was walking so strongly and definitely in medal contention with 5km to go, faded badly and eventually retired. Tallent took third with 1:38:38 ahead of Swedish walker Mari Olsson

Australian 20km Championship, Hobart, Sunday 2nd Feb 2014			
1.	Kelly Ruddick	VIC	1:34:44
2.	Stephanie Stigwood	TAS	1:37:39
3.	Rachel Tallent	VIC	1:38:38
4.	Mari Olsson	SWE	1:38:58
5.	Jill Hosking	ACT	1:39:50
6.	Regan Lambie	VIC	1:40:49
7.	Kirsty Klein	NSW	1:42:17
8.	Lauren Bourke	NSW	1:45:33
9.	Beth Alexander	VIC	1:50:37
10.	Jessica Pickles	QLD	1:52:34
11.	Courtney Ruske	NZL	1:52:38
12.	Kate Newitt	NZL	1:53:10
-	Nicole Fagan	NSW	DNF
-	Erin Taylor-Talcott	USA	DNF
-	Tanya Holliday	SA	DQ
-	Julie Edmunds	NZL	DQ
-	Rozie Robinson	NZL	DQ

Australia had won the Oceania Racewalking Challenge on the two previous occasions, in 2010 and 2012, and it was the same again in 2014, but this time it was much more convincing: Australia 56 points to New Zealand 13.

A large contingent of Australian walkers travelled to Nomi, Japan, for the IAAF Race Walking Challenge event held in conjunction with the 2014 Asian 20km Race Walking Championships on Sunday 16th March 2014. The Australians were led brilliantly by **Dane Bird-Smith** (third place and a new PB of 1:21:01) and **Chris Erickson** (10th and a new PB of 1:22:19).

Australian Track & Field Championships Lakeside Stadium, Albert Park, Melbourne, Victoria, 3-6 April 2014

In 2014, 10,000m track walk championships were added to the official Australian T&F Championship program, with Melbourne hosting the first scheduling. **Dane Bird-Smith** continued his dominance over the shorter distances, winning with an excellent 38:57.16. **Chris Erickson** had gone with him in the first lap but was soon left behind, finishing second with 40:51.82, holding out a fast finishing **Rhydian Cowley**, who took third with 41:17.67. Bird-Smith lapped the entire field!

10000m Track Walk - Men - Friday 4th April 2014				
1	Dane Bird-Smith	1992	QLD	38:57.16
2	Chris Erickson	1981	VIC	40:51.82
3	Rhydian Cowley	1991	VIC	41:17.67
4	Adam Garganis	1997	VIC	46:04.66
5	Dean Nipperess	1971	QLD	48:52.01

6	Danny Hawksworth	1979	VIC	48:55.81
7	Jason Kozica	1987	VIC	49:13.32
8	Kyle Bird	1996	VIC	49:44.62
9	Simon Evans	1960	VIC	54:00.56

The women's 10,000m walk saw all 6 walkers together early, with **Kelly Ruddick** setting the pace. Eventually, **Tanya Holliday** strode to the front to take control and the group immediately split. **Nicole Fagan** continued her good form of late and was the only one who could go with Holliday but even she eventually cracked. Holliday strode on to win the inaugural title with a fast 45:08.42 ahead of Fagan, with a huge PB of 45:21.47, and Ruddick, with 45:25.90. Intriguingly Ruddick's W40 10km World Record stood at 45:26 so would a time of 45:29.90 beat that or would the Masters round up? It was a question that I am sure Ruddick would be asking! Swedish walker **Mari Olsson** also walked a big PB of 46:13.83 to take fourth place.

10000m Track Walk - Women - Friday 4 th April 2014				
1.	Tanya Holliday	1988	SA	45:08.42
2.	Nicole Fagan	1989	NSW	45:21.47
3.	Kelly Ruddick	1973	VIC	45:25.90
4.	Mari Olsson	1986	SWE	46:13.83
5.	Rachel Tallent	1993	VIC	46:34.41
-	Stephanie Stigwood	1990	TAS	DNF

26th IAAF World Race Walking Cup Taicang, China, 3-4 May 2014

The 2014 IAAF Racewalking World Cup was its usual huge spectacle, with the final race numbers counting out at 113 men and 88 women for the 20km events, 60 men for the 50km and 41 men and 48 women for the junior 10km races.

World Cup 50km Men, Saturday 3rd May 2014, 8AM

As usual, **Jared Tallent** had to play second fiddle to two Russians, both of whom would be found guilty of doping in 2015. Sadly, it was not possible to backdate the bans so they show as gold and silver in this race. I will not even grace these pages with their names. There was at least some justice retrospectively served when 4th placed Russian Yuriy Andronov failed a drugs test at the World Cup so was banned straight off.

With all that said, Tallent medalled once again – what an extraordinary record he was amassing. He had now won seven medals back-to-back at every major championship since he crossed for gold at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi. *“It was a quick race, and my race went to plan at the start. I went out with the Russians and made a move at about 15km to push the pace up but they were too strong in the closing stages. Honestly I am a little disappointed to not win the gold, I want it very much, but to know that I could hold on to the bronze position pretty comfortably in those closing stages is a big positive to take away from today. It can be really tough when you are the only man not in red, white and blue in the lead pack and I just have to keep doing my best and pushing them as hard as I can. I’m one man out in a group that train together and then compete together and to be in the mix when they walk as a group like that is a strong performance.”*

Not to be outdone, **Chris Erickson**, who placed 15th in the 50km at the 2013 IAAF World Championships, delivered his strongest international result by crossing 10th in a PB time of 3:49:33. *“I’m continuing to chip away at my time and that’s great. I have walked PB’s in both the 20km and 50km event this year and it’s good to know that I am continuing to improve each time I race at a major. I’m heading in the right direction, and I have a new PB so I’m happy.”*

World Cup 50km Men, Taicang, Saturday 3 rd May 2014			
1.	Mikhail Ryzhov	RUS	3:39:05
2.	Ivan Noskov	RUS	3:39:38
3.	Jared Tallent	AUS	3:42:48
	...		
10.	Chris Erickson	AUS	3:49:33

World Cup U20 Men 10km, Saturday 3rd May 2014, 3:30PM

A thrilling last 2km lap, with four men in contention at the bell saw **Gao Wenkui** triumph on home soil in the junior men's 10km race. Gao, arguably the pre-race favourite, showed outstanding maturity and tactical awareness for his 18 years and, after a failed attempt to race away from his rivals over the first half of the race, still had enough in reserve to launch a second attack on the final lap and take the gold medal in a championship record 39:40. Inevitably, there were loud cheers for Gao's success and a huge roar went up again when it was announced that China had won the team gold medals for the first time in the junior men's short history since the event came onto the championship programme in 2004.

Australia won a bronze medal in the U20 men's event behind China and Spain, compliments of **Nathan Brill** (7th in a PB 41:07) and **Jesse Osborne** (12th in 42:13). The result was Australia's first ever team medal in the junior events and our third team medal overall.

World Cup 10km U20 Men, Taicang, Saturday 3 rd May 2014			
1.	Wenkui Gao	CHN	39:40
2.	Daisuke Matsunaga	JPN	39:45
3.	Nikolay Markov	RUS	39:55
	...		
7.	Nathan Brill	AUS	41:07
12.	Jesse Osborne	AUS	42:13
-	Tyler Jones	AUS	DQ

World Cup 20km Women, 4:30PM, Saturday 3rd May 2014

Another major championship disappointingly won by Russian drugs cheat Anisiya Kirdyapkina (she was retrospectively banned in 2019 but retained this gold). To make matters worse, third place was taken by Russian Elmira Alambekova. She would be banned in 2015 and then disappear. Sadly this medal remains with her.

Australian representatives **Tanya Holliday** and **Kelly Ruddick** flew the Australian flag bravely. Crossing in 39th, Holliday was the better placed of the two in a season best time of 1:32:26, with Ruddick placing 49th in 1:34:00. Both girls were not far off their PBs.

World Cup 20km Women, Taicang, Saturday 3 rd May 2014			
1.	Anisiya Kirdyapkina	RUS	1:26:31
2.	Hong Liu	CHN	1:26:58
3.	Elmira Alambekova	RUS	1:27:02
	...		
39.	Tanya Holliday	AUS	1:32:36
49.	Kelly Ruddick	AUS	1:34:00

World Cup 10km U20 Women, Sunday 4th May 2014, 9AM

Duan Dandan and **Yang Jiayu** started the Sunday off in magnificent fashion for the host nation, taking gold and silver in the junior women's 10km. Duan clocked a 2014 junior world-leading time of 43:05, after briefly looking like she might get close to the World junior record of 41:57, held by her compatriot Gao Hongmiao since 1993, while Yang followed her home 32 seconds later. Both women, obviously spurred on by a cheering home crowd in Taicang, clocked substantial personal bests. The pair combined to give China a perfect score in the team competition and take the gold medals with just three points, regaining the title they won four years ago in the Mexican city of Chihuahua. Czech walker **Anežka Drahotova** hung on to take the bronze medal and was rewarded with a national record of 43:40. Emphasising the gulf between the medallists and the rest of the field, Spain's **Laura Garcia-Caro** finished fourth in a personal best of 45:29, almost two minutes behind the bronze medallist.

The Australian junior women combined to add yet another bronze to the Australian tally as they joined host country China (gold) and Spain (silver) on the podium following an impressive PB walk by **Clara Smith** (8th in 46:33), along with strong walks by **Jemima Montag** (12th in 47:34) and **Elizabeth Hosking** (25th in a PB 49:21).

World Cup 10km U20 Women, Taicang, Sunday 4 th May 2014			
1.	Dandan Duan	CHN	43:05

2.	Jiayu Yang	CHN	43:37
3.	Anežka Drahotova	CZE	43:40
	...		
8.	Clara Smith	AUS	46:33
12.	Jemima Mnotag	AUS	47:34
25.	Elizabeth Hosking	AUS	49:21

World Cup 20km Men, Sunday 4th May 2014, 10:10AM

This was another race in which drug cheats featured prominently. Winner Ruslan Dmytrenko of Ukraine was retrospectively banned in 2019, losing all his results from 2009 to 2012. Obviously he still had the effects of those years of doping in his system two years later in 2014. Third placed Andrey Ruzavin was suspended for doping soon after this meet. He never medalled again so this stands as his last one.

The three Australian representatives all walked strongly. **Dane Bird-Smith** clocked a PB 1:20:27 to take 14th place, **Rhydian Cowley** came 57th with a PB of 1:23:58, and London Olympian **Adam Rutter** rounded out the Australian contingent in 64th place, with a season best of 1:24:44.

The other big highlight for me in this race was the performance of the Canadian team who just missed out on third place in the Teams event by the barest of margins – one point! **Evan Dunfee** (11th in 1:20:13), **Inaki Gomez** (12th in 1:20:18) and **Ben Thorne** (13th in 1:20:19) all recorded big PBs and all broke the existing Canadian record which had been held by Gomez. Wow!

World Cup 20km Men, Taicang, Sunday 4 th May 2014			
1.	Ruslan Dmytrenko	UKR	1:18:37
2.	Zelin Cai	CHN	1:18:52
3.	Andrey Ruzavin	RUS	1:18:59
	...		
14.	Dane Bird-Smith	AUS	1:20:27
57.	Rhydian Cowley	AUS	1:23:58
64.	Adam Rutter	AUS	1:24:44

In summary, the 13 walkers who made up the Australian World Cup team became our most successful World Cup team ever, with a record breaking 3 medals

Jared Tallent	3 rd	Open 50km Championship
Junior Men	3 rd	Junior Men 10km Teams Event
Junior Women	3 rd	Junior Women 10km Teams Event

We had only ever won teams medals in the Open Men's 20km event. The fact that both junior boys and junior girls finished third overall was fantastic. Add in 6 PBs, 3 top-8 finishes and 6 top-12 finishes individually and it read impressively.

48th Lake Burley Griffin Carnival Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 8th June 2014

The 48th edition of the annual Lake Burley Griffin roadwalking carnival took place in almost perfect conditions - a crispy morning followed by a sunny winter's day. The overall number of walkers was slightly down on recent years but still our biggest yearly carnival with over 200 walkers in attendance. Once again, it was **Jared Tallent** who proved strongest, winning by over 4 minutes in 2:27:27. It was his ninth win in this event, one more than the great Willi Sawall, so he now stood alone at the top of the list. Fellow Olympians **Chris Erickson** (2:31:50) and **Adam Rutter** (2:32:53) took the minor medals, all 3 walkers considerably slower than in past years and obviously not in top racing shape post World Cup.

LBG 20 Mile, Canberra, Sunday 8 th June 2014			
1.	Jared Tallent	SARWC	2:27:27
2.	Chris Erickson	RWV	2:31:50
3.	Adam Rutter	NSWRWC	2:32:53

4.	Dean Nipperess	QRWC	3:07:19
5.	Justin Hill	SARWC	3:08:33
6.	Peter Crump	SARWC	3:08:53
7.	Aaron McDonough	RWV	3:10:05
8.	Terry O'Neill	RWV	3:38:10
9.	Robin Whyte	ACTW	3:45:03
10.	Robert Osborne	REGAL	3:53:57
11.	Karyn O'Neill (F)	RWV	3:54:36
12.	Bill Starr	SARWC	4:16:29
-	Brendon Reading	ACTW	DNF
-	Michael Harvey	RWV	DNF

Australian Roadwalk Championships Albany, WA, Sunday 24th August 2014

The 2014 Australian National Roadwalking Championships in Albany, Western Australia were well organised and held on a fast 1km lap. The only thing missing was the walkers. In total, the results sheet shows only 30 walkers in the Athletics Australia Championships and a further 21 in the purely RWA races - 51 all together. Of these, only 15 were from outside Western Australia (QLD 3, VIC 2, NSW 3, TAS 0, ACT 3, SA 4). What a disaster for racewalking and, unfortunately, just as expected. When Athletics Australia asked stakeholders in November 2013 to provide feedback on Albany as a venue, the walking community was united in saying that Albany was not the right choice. Alas, AA went ahead and confirmed the city, ignoring our concerns. As they say, the proof is in the pudding.

Dane Bird-Smith successfully defended his national 20km men's title, streeting the field with 1:27:38 and winning by 16 minutes! In the women's 20km, **Nicole Fagan** was quite literally unchallenged for the national title. Fagan was the only competitor to make it to the start line after a number of athlete withdrawals. Regardless of the lack of female competition, she pushed herself out to a 4:40 first km and challenged herself all the way around the course to cross the finish line in 1:41:07.

Aust Men 20km Championship, Perth, Sun 24th Aug 2014			
1.	Bird-Smith, Dane	QLD	1:27:38
2.	Hennighan, Dale	WA	1:43:56
3.	Nipperess, Dean	QLD	1:48:01
4.	Hastie, Garry	WA	1:57:15
-	Crump, Peter	SA	DQ

Aust Women 20km Championship, Perth, Sun 24th Aug 2014			
1.	Nicole Fagan	NSW	1:41:07

2014 Australian 50km Championship Fawkner Park, Melbourne, Sunday 14th December 2014

The Australian 50km championship, held as usual on a Sunday morning at Fawkner Park, proved to be a race of fluctuating fortunes. The 7AM start time was good given the projected top of 29°C. It was certainly hot, sunny and windy early and the stage looked set for a torrid affair but luckily it clouded over in the second half of the race as a cooler change came through.

Local walker **Chris Erickson** came from behind to take out the race, effectively ensuring his selection for the 2015 IAAF World Championships. Erickson had trailed visiting international **Evan Dunfee** (CAN) for most of the race before surging to the lead with less than 4km to go and going on to win by almost two minutes. The 33-year-old Victorian crossed the finish line in a time of 3:56:38, ahead of Dunfee in second with 3:58:34 and **Brendon Reading** (ACT) third in 4:19:30 in his debut at the 50km distance. **Jared Tallent** had been forced to pull out after encountering stomach problems and vomiting shortly after the 18km mark. Dual Olympian **Adam Rutter** (NSW) and masters athlete **Andrew Jamieson** (Vic) both also dropped out of the race not long after

Erickson said he concentrated on his own pacing during the race rather than worrying about Dunfee's early break. "We had a fairly steady start and then between about 6km and 8km we went 9:05 or something like that and I thought it was

a little too fast for me at that stage. I thought the conditions were too tough to start doing that, so I sort of let him go and settled back into my rhythm of 9:20s. I was just sort of holding that comfortably but I got in a rough spot after about 35km and started to slow. Then conditions started to swing around a bit and it got a lot cooler. I got a second wind at about 40km and started to feel really good and then at that same time I realised that Evan was starting to struggle. I think courtesy of him having a bright orange shirt, he was like a beacon in front of me and I could see him coming back (to me). I went a 10 minute lap and then the next one was 9:30 and then a couple of 9:20s. I was really reeling him in and I knew I had him at that stage.”

Erickson now planned to refocus on the 20km event ahead of the official trial at that distance in late February 2015, so that he could try for the 20km/50km double at the IAAF World Championships.

Australian 50km Championship, Melbourne, Sun 14th Dec 2014			
1.	Chris Erickson	VIC	3:56:38
2.	Evan Dunfee	CAN	3:58:34
3.	Brendon Reading	ACT	4:19:30
-	Adam Rutter	NSW	DNF
-	Jared Tallent	SA	DNF
-	Andrew Jamieson	VIC	DNF

2015

Australian 20km Summer Championships Adelaide Parklands, Adelaide, Sunday 22nd February 2015

The annual Australian Summer 20km roadwalk championships left Hobart after a very successful 5 year stint and moved to Adelaide in 2015, but what a day to return – the Saturday had seen a temperature of 40°C and the same was forecast for the Sunday after an overnight low of 26°C. The 7AM start time for the 20km meant that at least the event would not be contested in the extreme heat of the day but conditions were still less than ideal.

With pre-race co-favourite Dane Bird-Smith a surprise late scratching in the men's 20km championship, the pressure was off **Jared Tallent** and he quickly went out to a commanding lead, completing the first 2km lap in 8:25, some 25 secs clear of a chasing group led by **Chris Erickson**, **Rhydian Cowley** and NZ Champion **Quentin Rew**. Erickson and Rew then upped the ante and started the chase but it was never to be, as Tallent continued to extend his lead throughout the race. When Cowley dropped off the chasing group around the 9km mark, the first 3 places looked settled and that was that. After a first half of 41:44, Tallent kept the pressure on in the hot conditions, crossing the finish line to win in 1:24:05. Rew broke away from Erickson around the 14km mark to take second in 1:25:22, while Erickson came home strongly for third in 1:25:42. It was then a fair way back to Cowley in 1:28:06, followed by **Adam Rutter** with 1:31:00.

Australian Summer 20km Men, Adelaide, Sun 22nd Feb 2015			
1.	Jared Tallent	SA	1:24:05
2.	Quentin Rew	NZL	1:25:22
3.	Chris Erickson	VIC	1:25:42
4.	Rhydian Cowley	VIC	1:28:06
5.	Adam Rutter	NSW	1:31:00
6.	Jay Felton	NSW	DQ
7.	Joel Zhi Xuan Koh	SIN	DQ

The women's championship was a closer affair, with 2012 Olympian **Beki Smith** leading from the start but shadowed by a pack which included the other main contenders in **Stephanie Stigwood**, **Rachel Tallent** and **Tanya Holliday**, with **Kelly Ruddick** not far behind. By 10km, it was Tallent, Smith and Holliday in control with 46:23, with Ruddick and Stigwood further back. Smith briefly took the lead at 15km but was soon reeled back in again, with Holliday showing all her experience to take the win in 1:34:05 ahead of Smith with 1:34:35 and Tallent with 1:35:03. The big improver in the field was NZ champion **Alana Barber**. Walking a conservative first half of 47:40, she negative split the second half, finishing just behind Tallent with 1:35:07.

Australian Summer 20km Women, Adelaide, Sun 22nd Feb 2015			
1.	Tanya Holliday	SA	1:34:05

2.	Beki Smith	NSW	1:34:35
3.	Rachel Tallent	VIC	1:35:03
4.	Alana Barber	NZL	1:35:07
5.	Kelly Ruddick	VIC	1:36:17
6.	Stephanie Stigwood	TAS	1:37:19
7.	Kirsty Klein	NSW	1:41:59
-	Nicole Fagan	NSW	DNF
-	Mari Olsson	SWE	DNF

Australian Track & Field Championships - 2014-15

Queensland State Athletics Centre, Brisbane, Queensland, 26-29 March 2015

Alas, the 10,000m track walks at the 2015 Australian T&F Championships in Brisbane were very small affairs. It had been a long summer and it was an expensive trip up north. But good repeat wins to **Tanya Holliday** (44:56.44) and **Dane Bird-Smith** (39:53.89).

10000m Track Walk - Men - Friday 27 March 2015

1	Dane Bird-Smith	QLD	39:53.89
2	Rhydian Cowley	VIC	42:29.00
3	Luke McCutcheon	QLD	49:24.26
4	Danny Hawksworth	VIC	51:49.78

10000m Track Walk - Women - Friday 27 March 2015

1.	Holliday Tanya	SA	44:56.44
2.	Klein Kirsty	NSW	49:33.06
-	Ruddick Kelly	VIC	DNF

49th Lake Burley Griffin Carnival

Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 7th June 2015

The 49th Lake Burley Griffin Carnival was once again a huge show with over 200 walkers from across Australia contesting events ranging from U10 1km through to the Open 20 Mile walk. It was very cold early (-4°C) and foggy but, as the morning progressed, the temperature slowly rose and we had a beautiful sunny winter's afternoon for the shorter events.

The 20 Mile and 10 Mile events started in freezing conditions at 8AM and it was **Quentin Rew** and **Jared Tallent** who strode straight the front, walking side by side for the first 11 miles until Rew broke free. Tallent soon got back into contact and the second lap proceeded with them side by side once again. But it was Rew who was the stronger over the final hills (it is indeed a very hilly 10 mile loop!) and he cleared away in the final couple of miles to win in a very impressive 2:21:17, denying Tallent a 10th win. Tallent was not far behind with 2:23:02 and **Ian Rayson** rounded out the first three with a strong 2:27:49.

LBG 20 Mile, Canberra, Sunday 7th June 2015

1.	Quentin Rew	RWV	2:21:17
2.	Jared Tallent	SARWC	2:23:02
3.	Ian Rayson	REGAL	2:27:49
4.	Brendon Reading	ACTW	2:33:30
5.	Bradley Simpson	RWV	2:50:35
6.	Darren Bown (M)	SARWC	2:52:53
7.	Peter Crump (M)	SARWC	3:14:19
8.	Terry O'Neill (M)	RWV	3:28:01
9.	Robin Whyte (M)	ACTW	3:44:42
10.	Karyn O'Neill (M)(F)	RWV	3:46:59

In mid June, the team to contest the World Championships was finalised, reading as shown below.

50km Men **Jared Tallent** (SA) **Chris Erickson** (VIC)

20km Men	Jared Tallent (SA)	Dane Bird-Smith (QLD)	Chris Erickson (VIC)
20km Women	Tanya Holliday (SA)	Beki Smith (NSW)	Rachel Tallent (VIC)

Jared Tallent was doing the 20/50km double as usual but so was Chris Erickson, for the first time. A PB of 19:23 in winning the Victorian 5000m track championship followed by a 20km PB of 1:22:08 in coming 10th in the IAAF Challenge event in Nomi, Japan, had cemented Erickson's 20km spot.

28th Summer Universiade Gwanju, South Korea, 3-14 July 2015

The 2015 World University Games saw 5 Australian walkers in action in the 20km: **Dane Bird-Smith, Rhydian Cowley, Rachel Tallent, Stephanie Stigwood** and **Nicole Fagan**. The men's 20km, held on Thursday 9th July, saw Bird-Smith capture the first athletics gold medal for Australia, out-walking Canada's Benjamin Thorne to win by just three seconds, 1:21:30 to 1:21:33. In muggy and wet conditions, on the road adjacent to the World Cup Stadium, Bird-Smith was always in the lead group pushing the pace, and just waiting for his moment to pounce. It was definitely the biggest win of his career thus far. Further back in the field, Cowley finished in 13th place with a time of 1:28:12.

While the men had rainy conditions, the women had a much more torrid time of it the next morning, with sunny, hot and humid conditions making it very hard going. The news from an Australian perspective was good - Tallent 7th with 1:37:40 and further back, Stigwood 14th with 1:42:05 and Fagan 18th with 1:46:42 had earned a teams bronze.

While other walkers in the World Championships team headed overseas, Chris Erickson stayed on the local front, clocking up wins in the Victorian 10km (40:36), 15km (a PB 1:01:09) and 30km (2:17:34). Using an altitude tent and a make-shift heat chamber at his home, he was able to delay his departure for the World Championships to the last minute. This was the price to be paid, post AIS. With a young family and full time work, he had to limit his time away. His selection was made even more special when he was announced as one of four team captains for the Australian T&F World Championships team.

15th IAAF World Championships in Athletics Beijing, China, 22-30 August 2015

The 2015 IAAF World Championships were held in late August in Beijing, China. 205 IAAF member countries and territories participated, two more than in 2013, with new IAAF member, Kosovo, making its debut. South Sudan was also set to participate for the first time, but its sole athlete did not show up. The doping scandal was finally engulfing Chegin and his Russian walkers. Only one Russian walker was in the entry lists for Beijing; a relatively unknown by the name of Alexander Yargunkin had been entered in the 50km. However, he did not turn up, amidst rumours that he had also tested positive and been removed before he could be disqualified. It was a wonderful feeling to know that the rest of the world's walkers could finally compete in clean races.

World Championships 20km Walk Men, Sunday 23rd August 2015, 8:30AM

The walks program started with the men's 20km. Even though it was an 8:30AM start, it was already hot and humid and the water stations were in great demand right from the gun. Although the race started and finished on the track, the majority of it was contested over a 1km road course outside the Birds Nest and a big crowd was on hand for one of the few free spectacles on offer.

From the gun, the three Chinese athletes made it clear they were going to make an effort to take this home race. The effort almost worked, as the group held the lead until the bell. At almost that moment, returning bronze medalist **Miguel Ángel López** had finally worked his way back to the lead and he went on to win, ahead of **Zhen Wang** and Canadian **Benjamin Thorne**.

The three Australian representatives toughed it out for the whole way in the tough conditions. **Dane Bird-Smith** was the standout, finishing eighth with 1:21:37 and confirming his status as the next big thing in Australian walking. **Jared Tallent** was back in 26th spot with 1:24:19, with his best shot of a podium finish to come in the 50km race. But he did not seem worried by the finishing spot, still believing he could be a contender in his favoured longer event. "*The pace is totally different for the 50K. Today I felt like I could go forever, I just couldn't go any faster. I probably didn't finish off as well as I thought I could, mentally I was struggling a bit. But I am looking forward to next week.*" **Chris Erickson**,

also doing the 20km/50km double alongside Tallent, was another walker to have a tough day in the office, finishing 32nd in 1:25:15. Like Tallent, he now had 6 days to recover and prepare for his favoured event, the 50km. Of the 61 starters, there were 50 finishers, 5 DQs and 6 DNFs. There were only 3 PBs in the torrid conditions. Although the Chinese did not win gold, they were the dominant team with 2nd, 5th and 9th places. After many years in the walking doldrums, it was great to see 6 Commonwealth walkers in the top 20. This omened well for the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Indian racewalker **Baljinder Singh** had finished 12th, but it turned out that he had been directed back into the stadium with one lap still to go, so his finishing status was changed to DNF.

World Championships 20km Men, Sunday 23 rd August 2015			
1.	Miguel Angel Lopez	ESP	1:19:14
2.	Zhen Wang	CHN	1:19:29
3.	Benjamin Thorne	CAN	1:19:57
	...		
8.	Dane Alex Bird-Smith	AUS	1:21:37
26.	Jared Tallent	AUS	1:24:19
32.	Chris Erickson	AUS	1:25:15

World Championships 20km Walk Women, Friday 28th August 2015, 8:30AM

Like the men's 20km race the previous Sunday, the early start in the women's 20km had little effect and the race was held in clear sunny and hot conditions. The defending champion Elena Lashmanova was a notable absentee, while she served a drugs suspension. As in the men's 20km, no Russians competed in this race either. World record holder **Liu Hong** and her Chinese teammate **Xiuzhi Lu** dominated the race, battling neck and neck the whole way until they re-entered the stadium, when Lu seemed to concede to Liu and walked the remainder on the track in her footsteps. With the domestic crowd going crazy, Lu crossed the finish line virtually in Liu's shadow, the separation 0.26 of a second for the closest finish for a race walk in World Championships history. Because it is a road course, the official times are only accurate to one second so both athlete's times round to the same time. **Lyudmila Olyanovska** finished 28 seconds back for bronze.

And what of the Australians? **Kelly Ruddick**, the oldest walker in the field at age 42, did not make it to the start line. After a very promising week training in Japan in some pretty tough heat, she moved to Beijing with the team, only to then spend 4 days in bed on medication for vertigo from an inner ear infection. The team doctor eventually recommended that she not race (as she could hardly stand anyway, this was the only decision that could be taken). It was a devastating end for what should have been a career highlight for Ruddick. **Beki Smith** also had her championship dreams shattered, incurring a DQ mid race while walking strongly and making her way up through the field. So it was left to 22 year old **Rachel Tallent** as our sole finisher (34th with 1:36:27). She was on PB pace early on but suffered in the last 5km in particular and fell back in the heat.

World Championships 20km Women, Friday 28 th August 2015			
1.	Hong Liu	CHN	1:27:45
2.	Xiuzhi Lu	CHN	1:27:45
3.	Lyudmila Olyanovska	UKR	1:28:13
	...		
34.	Rachel Tallent	AUS	1:36:27
-	Beki Smith	AUS	DQ
-	Kelly Ruddick	AUS	DNS

World Championships 50km Walk Men, Saturday 29th August 2015, 7:30AM

The 50km race start time of 7:30AM on the Saturday morning was a godsend as it ensured that the first half of the race was completed in semi shade and slightly cooler conditions. The second half was a torrid affair but 50km walkers are a pretty tough lot and everyone seemed to tough it out pretty well.

Presumably **Matej Toth** shook hands with some of his fellows before the start of the 50km road walk on Saturday morning. It would be some time before he would see any of them again. Toth led the walk virtually from gun to tape. The world leader that year, he became the best in the world, too, with his winning time of 3:40:32. **Jared Tallent** acquired yet another minor medal in finishing second in 3:42:17. It was his third World Championships medal, to go with his silver medal in Daegu in 2011 and his bronze Moscow two years ago. He also had medals from the past two Olympic Games so had taken a medal at the major global championship 50km events five times in succession. "*It was*

brutal out there today, but I am very happy with the result. Matej was always going to be very hard to beat, he walked 3:34 earlier in the year. I've trained with him, I know hard he works so when he went away early I didn't want to chase too hard because, I guess, I didn't want to blow up and fade. I had a very strong last ten kilometres. I was hoping he might struggle a bit and I could close the gap but it wasn't to be. I'm stoked. To come back to the Bird's Nest and walk away with another silver is pretty good. It's not the gold that I wanted, but I'm proud of the result that I have."

Japan's **Takayuki Tanii** won the back-and-forth battle with teammate **Hirooki Arai** and Ireland's defending champion **Robert Heffernan** to take the bronze medal in 3:42:55. Each of them looked to have a medal in their keeping at different times in the latter stages of the race.

Chris Erickson held together well, sitting around 15th for most of the race and improving to a final position of 13th with a time of 3:51:26. This was less than 2 mins outside his PB and went a long way to confirming his spot for the 2016 Olympics in Rio. *"I was tenth at the World Cup, but the World Championships is another level. I was 15th in Moscow so I have improved on that and I hung tough in that last 10 kilometres, having a bit of a race with the Chinese athlete, and it was great to come past him in the last lap."*

World Championships 50km Men, Sat 29th August 2015			
1.	Matej Toth	SVK	3:40:32
2.	Jared Tallent	AUS	3:42:17
3.	Takayuki Tanii	JPN	3:42:55
	...		
13.	Chris Erickson	AUS	3:51:26

Australian Roadwalk Championships Middle Park, Victoria, Sunday 30th August 2015

A cold but luckily rain-free morning saw some excellent racing as walkers from every State descended on the VRWC's racing circuit in Middle Park to contest the 2015 winter roadwalking titles. A highlight of the meet had to be the re-emergence of **Regan Lamble**, after a layoff of something like two years. To produce 1:32:51 on no racing base whatsoever showed just how talented and valuable to the sport she was. She was an easy winner of the women's 20km, just as **Ian Rayson** was an easy winner of the men's 20km.

Australian 20km Men, Melbourne, Sunday 30th August 2015			
1.	Ian Rayson	NSW	1:25:46
2.	Rhydian Cowley	VIC	1:27:16
3.	Nathan Brill	VC	1:31:36
4.	Jay Felton	NSW	1:32:07
5.	Justin Hill	SA	1:40:38
6.	Dale Hennighan	WA	1:41:29
7.	Jason Kozica	VIC	1:56:48
-	Andrew Jamieson	VIC	DNF
-	David Smyth	VIC	DNF
-	Paul Moritz	VIC	DNF

Australian 20km Men, Melbourne, Sunday 30th August 2015			
1.	Regan Lamble	VIC	1:32:51
2.	Kristie Goznik	SA	1:42:11
3.	Stephanie Stigwood	TAS	1:43:58

Australian 50km Championship Fawkner Park, Melbourne, Sunday 13th December 2015

A maximum of 28°C meant potentially tough conditions for walkers in the 2015 Australian 50km championship meet, but the 7AM start time and the superbly shaded 2km course at Fawkner Park meant that the contenders were afforded every chance of a good time. And respond they did - 39 walkers, 18 PBs, 3 National Records, 11 Olympic Qualifiers, 4 World Junior Qualifiers and 5 World Cup Qualifiers. That made this meet the highest quality racewalking carnival ever seen in Australia outside the 2000 Olympics and confirmed racewalking was still Australia's strongest T&F discipline.

The 50km kicked off at 7AM with 4 Australians, 3 Canadians and 1 South African ensuring a cosmopolitan mix. The aim for most of them was to achieve the Olympic qualifying standard. But a trio of athletes achieved more than that. Winner **Evan Dunfee** smashed the Canadian record by more than three minutes, clocking 3:43:45, second-place finisher **Chris Erickson** bagged yet another national title, and **Marc Mundell** in third broke his own African record.

World 20km bronze medallist **Ben Thorne** was treating the race as a training exercise and built up a significant early lead before withdrawing after 16km. That left Dunfee well ahead of a chasing pack which comprised Erickson, **Inaki Gomez**, **Ian Rayson** and Mundell, and he extended that lead as the race progressed. The chase pack began to break up just before 30km as Erickson sped up, leaving Gomez and Mundell behind. Dunfee kept up his relentless pace to the end, winning in 3:43:45. As well as smashing the Canadian record and easily achieving the Canadian Federation's 3:54:20 qualifying standard for Rio, the 25-year-old took more than six minutes off the PB he set when finishing 12th at the IAAF World Championships Beijing 2015.

"Last month in Australia here I've been training in a supernova study down in Canberra," said Dunfee, who finished second in this race last year in what was then a PB of 3:58:34. *"I'm in really good shape, so I knew I was ready for a big one. I wasn't sure whether it would be a hard or fast race really, so I didn't really make my decision until about 3km into the race and I thought I'd go for it. I'm really happy with it and it felt really good. I think there's a bit more in the tank there when push comes to shove. I've taken 14 minutes off my PB this year; another 14 minutes and we're good! This course is so easy to walk on, it's by far my favourite course. It makes it so much easier to get into a rhythm and keep it."*

Erickson, who finished one place behind Dunfee in the 50km in Beijing earlier this year, successfully defended his national title with a time of 3:54:10, booking his spot on what would be his third Olympic team. Mundell was close behind in third place in 3:54:12, breaking the African record he set at the London 2012 Olympics.

It would be remiss of me if I did not mention the wonderful battle between Australians Rayson and **Brendon Reading**. After trailing for the entire race, Reading finally caught and passed Rayson with one lap to go, storming home for a 24 minute PB of 3:55:03 and raising the ante for the third Australian Olympic 50km berth behind Tallent and Erickson. Rayson finished only 14 secs in arrears with his own PB time of 3:55:17.

Australian 50km Championship, Melbourne, Sun 13th Dec 2015			
1.	Evan Dunfee	CAN	3:43:45
2.	Chris Erickson	VIC	3:54:10
3.	Marc Mundell	RSA	3:54:12
4.	Brendon Reading	ACT	3:55:03
5.	Ian Rayson	NSW	3:55:17
6.	Inaki Gomez	CAN	4:04:12
7.	Danny Hawksworth	VIC	4:58:30
-	Benjamin Thorne	CAN	DNF

2016

Australian 20km Summer Championships Adelaide Parklands, Adelaide, Sunday 21st February 2016

The Australian Summer 20km Championships were held in the North Adelaide Parklands on the morning of Sunday 21st February, as they had been in 2015. With a forecast for 36°C, the 7AM start time proved a wise decision and the 2km course was well shaded and stayed relatively cool throughout the race. And what a race it was, with 15 Olympic qualifiers in the 20km events (9 in the men's 20km and 6 in the women's 20km), along with a further 10 Australian World Race Walking Teams Championships qualifiers spread across the 20km and 10km events.

The Men's 20km saw Swedish walker **Perseus Karlstrom** stride to an early lead, soon building up a gap of some 15 secs, which he held until the 14km mark. Although he was eventually caught and passed and ended up 6th in 1:21:03, it was still a PB. Behind him, a large group ate up the laps, getting faster as they went. Eventually it was down to five – **Dane Bird Smith**, **Lebogang Shange** of South Africa and the Canadians **Ben Thorne**, **Inaki Gomez** and **Evan Dunfee**. And that was their position as they crossed the finish line with Bird-Smith 1:20:04, Shange 1:20:06 and Thorne 1:20:08 contesting a final exciting sprint. **Rhydian Cowley** finished 9th with his own huge PB of 1:22:07, almost certainly cementing an Olympic spot. And I can't forget the performances of the 3rd and 5th placed Australians in **Michael**

Hosking and Nathan Brill. Hosking astonished us all with a walk of 1:26:16 in December in his first ever 20km and his first walk for 15 years. He improved a further 1:34 in Adelaide to record 1:24:42 – and that performance was completed on top of a twangy hamstring that saw him lose about 1 minute with multiple stops throughout the race! 19 year old Brill, in only his second 20km, also did a huge PB with 1:27:14.

Chris Erickson was the one notable absentee. He had intended to race but was sidelined with a heavy cold. Losing valuable training time, he chose to bypass the 2016 World Racewalking Team Championships in Rome and concentrate on his Olympic 50km appointment.

Australian 20km Men, Adelaide, Sunday 21st February 2016		
1.	Dane Bird-Smith	QLD 1:20:04
2.	Lebogang Shange	STH AFRICA 1:20:06
3.	Benjamin Thorne	CANADA 1:20:08
4.	Inaki Gomez	CANADA 1:20:22
5.	Evan Dunfee	CANADA 1:20:34
6.	Perseus Karlström	SWEDEN 1:21:03
7.	Yerko Araya Cortes	CHILE 1:21:26
8.	Wayne Snyman	STH AFRICA 1:21:45
9.	Rhydian Cowley	VIC 1:22:07
10.	Jakub Jelonek	POLAND 1:24:22
11.	Michael Hosking	VIC 1:24:42
12.	Anatole Ibanez	SWEDEN 1:25:11
13.	Marc Mundell	STH AFRICA 1:27:08
14.	Brendon Reading	ACT 1:27:12
15.	Nathan Brill	VIC 1:27:14
16.	Giovanni Renó	ITALY 1:29:23
17.	Ian Rayson	NSW 1:32:07
18.	Carl Gibbons	NSW 1:35:23
19.	Kim Mottrom	SA 1:35:25
-	Jay Felton	NSW DNF
-	Quentin Rew	NZL DQ

The women's 20km saw 6 Olympic qualifiers in action and it was tantalising to try to predict the final outcome. After a few laps of positioning, it was **Regan Lamble** who burst from the pack to take a clear lead, ahead of **Beki Smith** and **Tanya Holliday**. But she had slowed drastically even before the 10km was reached (shins from what I heard) and was eventually forced to retire. The lead swapped a few times before **Rachel Tallent** took control, storming home for a 2:43 PB time of 1:31:33. Behind her, Holliday fought hard to take 2nd (1:32:15) ahead of a tiring Smith (1:32:49), with **Stephanie Stigwood** coming 4th with 1:33:45.

Australian 20km Women, Adelaide, Sunday 21st February 2016		
1.	Rachel Tallent	VIC 1:31:33
2.	Tanya Holliday	SA 1:32:15
3.	Beki Smith	NSW 1:32:49
4.	Stephanie Stigwood	TAS 1:33:45
5.	Alana Barber	NZL 1:35:29
6.	Siu Ching	HONG KONG 1:36:59
7.	Jessica Pickles	QLD 1:41:05
8.	Kristie Goznik	SA 1:42:17
9.	Danielle Walsh	SA 1:52:04
10.	Kelly Ruddick	VIC DNF
11.	Regan Lamble	VIC DNF

There didn't seem to be any stopping 23 year old **Dane Bird-Smith**. Walking in the Melbourne Track Classic 5000m on the evening of Saturday 5th March, he powered through to a new Australian, Oceania and Commonwealth best time of 18:38.97. This bettered Eder Sanchez's Australian All-Comers record of 18:40.11 (Sydney, 2009), Jared Tallent's Australian Residential Record of 18:41.83 (Sydney, 2009) and Nathan Deakes' meet record of 18:45.19 (Melbourne, 2006). Further, it is a World Leading 5000m track walk time for the year. It was the perfect warmup for the Australian 10,000m Track Walk Championships 4 weeks later.

By mid March, Athletics Australia selectors had confirmed a team of 18 walkers for the 2016 IAAF World Race Walking Team Championships. Chris Erickson was the only notable absentee, opting to bypass the meet and concentrate on his Olympic preparation.

Open 20km Men **Dane Bird-Smith, Rhydian Cowley, Michael Hosking, Brendan Reading, Nathan Brill**
 Open 50km Men **Jared Tallent, Ian Rayson**
 Open 20km Women **Rachel Tallent, Tanya Holliday, Beki Smith, Stephanie Stigwood, Regan Lamble**
 U20 10km Men **Tyler Jones, Kyle Swan, Adam Garganis**
 U20 10km Women **Zoe Hunt, Clara Smith, Tayla-Paige Billington**

Australian Track & Field Championships

Sydney Olympic Park Athletic Centre, Homebush, Sydney, NSW, 31 March - 3 April 2016

The 2016 Australian T&F Championships in Sydney doubled as the official Olympic trials for most events so the competition was intense. Although not trial events, the 10,000m walks, held on the evening of Friday 1st April, also proved high quality events. **Dane Bird Smith** and **Beki Smith** were the two winners, both doing PBs (Bird-Smith 38:44.61, PB 0:12 and Smith 43:48.08, PB 0:36) and both setting meet records. For Bird-Smith, it was the latest in a wonderful series of walks – he was already in the Olympic team and continued to improve in leaps and bounds. For Smith, it confirmed her great form and made her own Olympic selection case a lot stronger.

1	Dane Bird Smith	1992	QLD	38:44.61
2	Tyler Jones	1998	NSW	43:39.86
3	Jay Felton	1995	NSW	44:30.04
4	Carl Gibbons	1996	NSW	47:21.49
5	Jason Kozica	1988	VIC	47:25.55
6	Danny Hawksworth	1979	VIC	50:30.99
7	Dean Nipperess	1971	QLD	50:44.50
-	Rhydian Cowley	1991	VIC	DNF

1.	Smith, Beki	86	ACT	43:48.08
2.	Holliday, Tanya	88	SA	44:33.87
3.	Smith, Clara	98	QLD	47:17.64
4.	Pickles, Jessica	94	QLD	48:49.77
5.	McInnes, Simone	91	VIC	51:45.07
6.	Laurie, Natalie	91	VIC	58:55.59
-	Billington, Tayla-Paige	97	VIC	DNF

27th World Race Walking Team Championships

Rome, 7-8 May 2016

The 2016 IAAF World Race Walking Team Championships was the 27th edition of the global team racewalking competition organised by the IAAF. It was also the first edition of the tournament under its new name, having previously been known as the IAAF World Race Walking Cup since 1989. The competition was organised at relatively short notice – Cheboksary had been originally chosen as the host city but the Russian Federation drugs suspension meant the host bidding was reopened. Rome was the clear winner in the bidding process in January 2016, with nine votes compared to Guayaquil and Kiev's four and Monterrey's two. It was the fourth time that the competition had been held in Italy, previous editions having visited the country in 1963, 1965 and 2002.

The course was set on the streets of Rome around the Baths of Caracalla. It was a flat looped route with the start point beside the Arch of Constantine and the Colosseum and the finish at the Stadio delle Terme di Caracalla. What could be better than to see over 400 walkers from 60 countries competing against such a backdrop!

U20 Women 10km (48 starters, 47 finishers), 9:30AM

The U20 women's 10km proved to be a great race, with a final finishing sprint over the final 300m between the two leading Chinese race walkers. As **Ma Zhenxia** and **Ma Li** shot through the finish line there was no impression of a conveniently agreed and possibly diplomatic tie. Both clearly wanted the victory, and it needed a photo finish to separate them by an amazing six-thousandths of a second – the first time any race at any World Cup has seen leading race walkers finish on the same second. There was a brave bronze for Mexico's **Valeria Ortuno** three seconds later, not only rewarded with a medal for refusing to yield when the pace ratcheted up, but a personal best by 15 seconds and an area U20 record on a day when new marks were few and far between. Three race walkers were given a two-minute pit stop in a bold experiment designed to spare athletes the ignominy of total disqualification.

The Australian girls did well. **Zoe Hunt** was in 6th spot at around the 9km mark when she was hit with a 2 minute Pit Lane penalty. She got going again to finish 17th in 48:11 but it could have been so much better. **Clara Smith** (7th in 47:10) and **Tayla-Paige Billington** (14th in 47:41) both walked great races and the Aussie girls took bronze in the teams event, matching the team bronze earned in the 2014 World Cup.

1.	Zhenxia Ma	CHN	45:25
2.	Li Ma	CHN	45:25
3.	Valeria Ortuno	MEX	45:28
...			
7.	Clara Smith	AUS	47:10
14.	Tayla-Paige Billington	AUS	47:41
17.	Zoe Hunt	AUS	48:11

U20 Men 10km (57 starters, 54 finishers), 10:35AM

Chinese walker **Jun Zhang** led the field through the 5km mark in a speedy 20:22, with a chasing pack a mere two seconds back. By 6km, a leading pack of four had come together - **Noel Chama** of Mexico, Zhang, **Callum Wilkinson** of GBR, and **Manuel Bermudez** of Mexico. The short but quick striding Zhang ate up the ground over the last kilometre to make certain of his win, and Bermudez also had a bit of daylight to spare to win silver. However, a magnificent last 150 metres ensued between the tiring Wilkinson and Chama, who clearly got a second wind in the dying stages of the race, excited the throng at the finishing line. The two were as far opposite as possible on the track heading to the line, but it was the Mexican who prevailed. Wilkinson's fourth-place finish was the highest position achieved by a Briton in any race at these championships since 1979.

Of the Australians, **Adam Garganis** was the best, coming 14th in a big PB of 42:24. **Kyle Swan**, one of the youngest in the field and eligible for the next World Teams Champs U20 10km in 2018, came 32nd in 44:07, while **Tyler Jones**, who repped in this comp in 2014, was 40th in 45:40. Overall, the boys' team came 6th.

1.	Jun Zhang	CHN	40:23
2.	Manuel Bermudez	ESP	40:27
3.	Noel Chama	MEX	40:29
...			
14.	Adam Garganis	AUS	42:24
32.	Kyle Swan	AUS	44:07
40.	Tyler Jones	AUS	45:40

Open Men 20km (122 starters, 102 finishers), 4:30PM

When it mattered, the pedigree of **Wang Zhen** shone through for an emphatic gold in the men's 20km. He won this competition in 2012 and, four years later, his speed was such that it provided the only draft for lapped race walkers caught in his wake as he made for the line. He had bided his time through a succession of pretenders who darted ahead and were reeled in like so many fish before the big one got away. Wang looked reasonably untroubled as he moved through the gears, and behind him Chinese teammate **Cai Zelin** also seized the chance to increase the revs, albeit at a distance. Spain's **Alvaro Martin** won the battle for bronze, only 2 seconds ahead of the fast-improving **Dane Bird-Smith**, who notched a second successive PB – and this time by 26 seconds.

The Canadians walked brilliantly as expected, taking the teams silver medal with **Ben Thorne** (5th 1:19:55), **Iñaki Gomez** (7th 1:20:123) and **Evan Dunfee** (15th 1:21:26). **Quentin Rew** set a new NZ record of 1:21:54 for 26th place and had probably cemented a Rio 20km spot to go with his 50km berth. Further back, **Rhydian Cowley** finished 39th with 1:23:21, yet another Olympic qualifier and one that would clinch his Rio spot. **Brendon Reading** and **Nathan Brill** were down on expected form, finishing 94th (1:32:32) and 95th (1:32:48). **Michael Hosking**, the fifth team member, was a scratching, due to a troublesome hamstring.

World Cup 20km Men, Rome, Saturday 7th May 2016			
1.	Zhen Wang	CHN	1:19:22
2.	Zelin Cai	CHN	1:19:34
3.	Alvaro Martin	ESP	1:19:36
4.	Dane Bird-Smith	AUS	1:19:38
...			
39.	Rhydian Cowley	AUS	1:23:21
94.	Brendon Reading	AUS	1:32:32
95.	Nathan Brill	AUS	1:32:48
-	Michael Hosking	AUS	DNS

Open Women 20km (104 starters, 89 finishers), 6:15PM

With her 20km victory, **Liu Hong** was one step close to completing the grand slam of major race walking titles. The Chinese race walker was the world record-holder and a two-time world champion. She had topped the IAAF Race Walking Challenge standings for the past two years and even won the World Junior title back in 2006. But the IAAF World Race Walking Team Championships was one title that, until this race, had eluded the 28-year-old.

Showing no signs the effects of a recent cold she had mentioned at the pre-event press conference, Liu was always present at the front of the race, along with Mexico's **Maria Guadalupe Gonzalez**, China's Olympic silver medallist **Qieyang Shenjie** and home hope **Eleonora Giorgi**. Just before 12km, Liu Hong upped the pace and opened a gap, crossing the finish line to win with 1:25:59, the second-fastest time in the history of the championships. This completed a Chinese sweep of all the individual gold medals on offer on Day One. Giorgi and Gonzalez battled side by side in a desperate bid for silver but, shortly before they entered the stadium, Giorgi was shown a third red card was disqualified, leaving Gonzalez alone in second place. Qieyang came through for third place in 1:26:49 while Brazil's **Erica de Sena** finished fourth in a South American record of 1:27:18. The biggest cheers were reserved for Italian veteran **Elisa Rigaud**. At 35 years of age, the 2008 Olympic bronze medallist equalled her best ever finish at this event to place fifth in 1:28:03.

With four athletes in the top eight, China secured their seventh gold medal of the day by taking the team title. Australia took second place in the teams event, complements of **Regan Lamble** 12th with 1:29:33, **Beki Smith** 15th with 1:29:49 and **Tanya Holliday** 16th with 1:29:56.

World Cup 20km Women, Rome, Sunday 8th May 2016			
1.	Hong Liu	CHN	1:25:59
2.	Maria Gonzalez Romero	MEX	1:26:17
3.	Shenjie Qieyang	CHN	1:26:49
...			
12.	Regan Lamble	AUS	1:29:33
15.	Beki Smith	AUS	1:29:49
16.	Tanya Holliday	AUS	1:29:56
41.	Rachel Tallent	AUS	1:34:16
67.	Stephanie Stigwood	AUS	1:38:42

Men 50km Race Walk (65 starters, 40 finishers), 9:00AM

This was a controversial event, with Italy's Alex Schwazer just returned from a drugs ban and fast tracked into the Italian team, much to the disgust of the other walkers. Let me jog my memory about Schwazer. I think that it was the Italian police who raided him in Germany before the London Olympics in 2012. He claimed that he had ordered EPO via the internet and that no one else was involved. He should have been given a 4 year suspension but was given a suspension of 3 years and 9 months by the Italian National Olympic Committee. That meant he could come back in time for the 2016 Olympics. He was still suspended at the time that entries closed for the 2016 World Cup and had no quali-

fyng performance. So the Italian Federation put on a special solo timetrial for him so that he could get a time on the board, then entered him late and paid a \$1000 fine to the IAAF. He had actually been caught doping again in January 2015, while still suspended so he should never have been in their World Cup team anyway. It is indeed a very grubby story.

The early laps were the usual cagey affair with the lead switching back and forth, but by 20km the race at the front was between a group of 4 - **Jared Tallent**, Schwazer, China's **Han Yucheng** and Italian **Matteo Giupponi** - the time a good 1:28:53. Schwazer made his winning break soon after this, eventually winning by over 3 minutes in a time of 3:39:00. It would not last long on the books.

The chasing group was soon reduced to two - Tallent and Han - and it stayed that way until the 39km mark when the Chinese didn't just slow; he stopped dead in his tracks. Remarkably, a few seconds earlier he had a final dig at getting away from the Australian and Tallent even moved aside to let the 37-year-old through on the inside at a turn. But in less than 200 metres, Han slowed to the same pace as strolling tourists, then stepped off the course, and Tallent was left to chase alone. Ukrainian **Igor Glavan** came through the field to finish next, ahead of Italians **Marco De Luca** and **Teodorico Caporaso**, both recording PBs. With three athletes in the top seven, Italy also won the team title. USA's **Erin Talcott**, the first woman ever to contest the 50km at this championships, crossed the line in 40th place in 4:51:08. **Ian Rayson**, the second of the Australian walkers, was a late withdrawal and did not race.

In June 2016, the Italian sports newspaper La Gazzetta dello Sport, reported that Schwazer had again tested positive to a banned substance. He was stripped of the win and banned for a second time, the gold now being awarded to Jared Tallent – yet another top finish for this astonishing walker.

World Cup 50km Men, Rome, Sunday 8th May 2016			
1.	Jared Tallent	AUS	3:42:36
2.	Igor Glavan	UKR	3:44:02
3.	Marco De Luca	ITA	3:44:47

50th Lake Burley Griffin Carnival Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Sunday 12th June 2016

The 50th edition of the iconic Lake Burley Griffin Carnival was a much anticipated event and it lived up to expectations. As befits our national capital in winter, the temperature was around -3°C when the Sunday morning dawned at 7AM and the mercury had not budged much by the time the 20 Miles and 10 Miles walks started at 8AM. With well over 200 walkers in attendance from across Australia, the LBG carnival continues to set the standard by which all other carnivals are measured.

As is always the case, most of our top walkers were there, with 2016 Olympians **Jared Tallent, Chris Erickson, Rhidian Cowley, Quentin Rew, Tanya Holliday** and **Rachel Tallent** in action, along with 2016 World Teams Champs walkers **Kyle Swan, Adam Garganis, Tyler Jones, Zoe Hunt, Tayla-Paige Billington** and **Alanna Barber**.

Erickson finally won the Open 20 Miles walk outright in what was his 13th attempt. Rarely out of the medals in his previous walks, he turned the tables this year on title holder Rew and 10 times winner Tallent, recording a 90 sec PB time of 2:19:51 and becoming one of the few walkers to break 2:20:00 for this demanding circuit. He was too strong in the second half and finished full of walking.

LBG 20 Mile, Canberra, Sunday 12th June 2016			
1.	Chris Erickson	RWV	2:19:51
2.	Quentin Rew	RWV	2:21:26
3.	Jared Tallent	SARWC	2:23:43
4.	Darren Bown	SARWC	3:01:17
5.	Peter Bennett	QRWC	3:08:17
6.	Argenis Guevara	QRWC	3:12:31
7.	Aaron McDonough	RWV	3:13:13
8.	Peter Crump	SARWC	3:18:23
9.	Dean Nipperess	QRWC	3:34:39
10.	Terry O'Neill	RWV	3:36:16
11.	Clarence Jack	RWV	3:40:47
12.	Lachlan Wilkinson	SARWC	3:58:25

13.	Karyn O'Neill (F)	RWV	3:58:53
14.	Bill Starr	SARWC	4:08:38
15.	Robert Osborne	REGAL	4:11:05
16.	Sandra Howarth (F)	RWV	4:38:28
17.	Val Chesterton (F)	ACTRWC	5:02:47
-	Rhydian Cowley	RWV	DNF
-	Robin Whyte	ACTRWC	DQ
-	Kevin Finn	SARWC	DQ

Friday 17th June 2016 was an exciting time for Australian racewalking, as it marked the awarding of the 2012 Olympic 50km Gold Medal to **Jared Tallent**. It was 4 years late, but better late than never. It took a few more years before Jared saw the first place prize money! I was among the large crowd in the Melbourne CBD to mark the occasion.

The Olympic Games walk contingent was finally confirmed in late June and read as follows

20km Men: **Dane Bird-Smith** (QLD) **Rhydian Cowley** (VIC)
50km Men: **Jared Tallent** (SA) **Chris Erickson** (VIC) **Brendon Reading** (ACT)
20km Women: **Regan Lamble** (VIC) **Tanya Holliday** (SA) **Rachel Tallent** (VIC)

XXXI Olympic Games Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 5-21 August 2016

More than 11,000 athletes from 207 nations took part in the 2016 Games, including first-time entrants Kosovo, South Sudan, and the Refugee Olympic Team. The sports were spread around the sprawling city, with the walks held at the beachside suburb of Pontal.

Olympic 20km Men, Friday 12th August 2016, 2:30PM

With a top temperature of 22°C and with a light wind, conditions were good for the men's 20km and there were plenty of good spots to watch what was one of the few free events of the Olympics. Unfortunately, the course was not ideal, with the 1km lap having very narrow turns at either end. Add to that the complete lack of facilities for spectators – no toilets, no stalls selling drinks or food or souvenirs – and an otherwise great event was diminished.

Despite the presence of Olympic champion **Chen Ding** and world champion **Miguel Angel Lopez**, the pre-race favourite on current form was China's **Wang Zhen**, and the winner at the IAAF World Race Walking Team Championships in Rome back in May didn't disappoint. Great Britain's **Tom Bosworth** had led the field through the halfway point on his own in 40:10, with Japan's **Daisuke Matsunaga** coming out of the chasing pack and passing 10km five seconds in arrears, with the 22-strong group another seven seconds further back. But it was Wang who pulled away from a seven-strong leading pack at 17km, winning in 1:19:14. With final laps of 7:42 and 7:26, no one was able to match him. **Zelin Cai** was next to finish, 12 seconds later. Coming home in third was an utterly delighted **Dane Bird-Smith** who had managed to pull away from **Caio Bonfim** over the final 1km lap to take the bronze medal in a personal best of 1:19:37.

The Canadian walkers were all in the mix at various times but it was **Evan Dunfee** who held on best, finishing 10th with 1:20:49. Further back, Australian **Rhydian Cowley** walked well to finish 33rd in 1:23:30. **Jared Tallent** had withdrawn in the weeks leading up to the event to concentrate on his 50km race the following Friday.

1.	Zhen WANG	CHN	1:19:14
2.	Zelin CAI	CHN	1:19:26
3.	Dane BIRD-SMITH	AUS	1:19:37
...			
33.	Rhydian COWLEY	AUS	1:23:30

Olympic 50km Men, Friday 19th August 2016, 8AM

It was a long day on Friday 19th August, with the men's 50km starting at 8AM and the women's 20km starting at 2:30PM. As had been the case for the men's 20km, there were no facilities, no toilets, no souvenir stalls, no bottled water for sale – NO NOTHING. It was a pathetic effort by the organisers.

Conditions were very tough for the 80 50km walkers, as evidenced by the fact that only 49 of them finished. It was already 22°C at race start time, with direct sun and high humidity. From then on, the temperature quickly rose and must have been in the high twenties by the time the race finished. But that was the temperature in the shade - out on the bitumen course, you could probably add a further 10°C. I got quite sunburnt as a spectator and I saw a few photos of competitors post-event, showing very burnt backs.

This was the most dramatic racewalk I have ever watched. Those who advocate for the removal of the 50km just do not appreciate the drama of this, the longest event in the T&F program. World Record holder **Johann Diniz** headed off on his own, reaching 5km in 22:10, with a lead of 28 seconds over current World Champion **Matej Toth** and defending Olympic champion **Jared Tallent**. Diniz's lead was 30 seconds at 10km and, after a 21:40 5km segment, he reached 15km in 1:05:58, by which point he was 53 seconds ahead of his nearest challengers. His lead continued to grow. It was 1:23 at 20km and 1:40 at half way. But with Toth and Canadian record-holder **Evan Dunfee** pushing the pace behind, a chase pack of nine athletes was now starting to make up ground on Diniz.

Disaster then struck for Diniz. Struggling with stomach problems, and possibly exhaustion, he stopped at about the 32km point. When Dunfee, who by this point had edged ahead of the chase pack, came past Diniz, the Frenchman started racing again. The pair walked together for the best part of a lap before Dunfee began to pull clear. The Pan-American 20km race walk champion continued to lead through 35km in 2:34:39 and was looking strong. Or much stronger than Diniz, at least. Diniz eventually dropped back to join five other men in the chase pack: Toth, Tallent, Japan's **Hirooki Arai**, China's **Yu Wei** and Ireland's 2013 world champion **Robert Heffernan**. Diniz then dramatically fell to the ground, was helped to his feet by an official, and was back in racing a few moments later.

Dunfee opened up a significant lead, but Toth and Tallent rejoined him before the 40km point, Tallent taking the split in 2:56:54. Within the space of 10 minutes, Tallent had a 12-second lead over Toth and Arai, while Dunfee started to slip back. At 45km, passed in 3:18:47, Tallent was 22 seconds ahead of Toth and was looking comfortable. I thought he had it won! Toth was digging hard and appeared to be struggling. But looks can be deceptive. Toth pulled clear of Arai and then began to close on Tallent. With the clock at 3:31:45, Toth went past Tallent. The look on Tallent's face - showing perhaps his first real sign of strain up to that point - said it all. Drama was unfolding behind, too. Dunfee had slipped to fourth but was gaining on world bronze medallist Arai. The Canadian dug in and went past Arai with just a couple of minutes to go. Arai responded, but collided with Dunfee, forcing him to lose momentum and fall back to fourth.

Toth's two-second lead over Tallent at the start of the final circuit grew to 18 seconds by the end, and he crossed the line in 3:40:58 to take his second global title in as many years. After the final turn, it looked as though Arai and even Dunfee would catch Tallent before the line. But the Australian gritted his teeth and held on to silver in a season's best of 3:41:16.

"When Jared pushed the pace, I didn't think I could get gold," said Toth. "He looked very strong, fast and light. The difference at one point was 22 seconds, which I thought was too much to make up. "When he pushed pace at 40km, I told myself that he deserves it, and that he will be a great Olympic champion. Behind him, I was just trying to achieve everything that I wanted to do. After 44km, I saw he was slowing down, so I tried to push. At that point I maybe wasn't pushing to win, but I just wanted to get all of my energy from my heart and my head into the race. It was only in the last 4km that I thought I could do it. It was one of the hardest 50km races in my career; the conditions were even tougher than in Beijing last year. It wasn't easy for me, but everyone wants to win."

Tallent, although disappointed to miss out on gold, was gracious in defeat. *"When I went into the lead, I really thought that this was going to be my moment to cross the line first and become Olympic champion. But I just didn't have it at the end. I'm pleased for Matej, though. He's a great guy and trains really hard."*

Behind the leading two, Arai crossed the line in third place in 3:41:24 with Dunfee close behind in a national record of 3:41:38. Canadian coaching staff asked for a review of the video, at which point the referee decided that an infraction had taken place. Arai was initially disqualified for obstructing Dunfee, but the decision was later reversed after a protest from Japan.

Yu was the top Chinese finisher, taking fifth place in 3:43:00. Heffernan placed sixth in 3:43:55, while Norway's **Havard Haukenes** finished strongly to take seventh in a PB of 3:46:33. Despite all of the dramas during the race, Diniz managed to finish in a respectable 3:46:43 in eighth, while **Caio Bonfim** gave the home crowd something to cheer for, setting a Brazilian record of 3:47:02 in ninth place. Australia's **Chris Erickson**, with a PB of 3:48:40 (one of only 4 to do so in the torrid conditions), rounded out the top 10. **Jesus Angel Garcia**, making his seventh Olympic appearance,

finished 20th in 3:54:29. While Tallent and Erickson both had great races, **Brendon Reading** had a horror day, finishing back in 40th with 4:13:02.

1.	Matej Toth	SVK	3:40:58
2.	Jared Tallent	AUS	3:41:16
3.	Hiroki Arai	JPN	3:41:24
	...		
10.	Chris Erickson	AUS	3:48:40
40.	Brendon Reading	AUS	4:13:02

Olympic 20km Women, Friday 19th August 2016, 2:30PM

What a difference a few hours can make. While the morning conditions were very tough for the men's 50km, a cool breeze came through right at the end of that race and continued into the afternoon. Thus the women's 20km was contested in much better weather.

Even so, it took a while for the real racing to begin. The lead pack, led by **Liu Hong** and **Maria Guadalupe Gonzalez**, dawdled through the half-way point in a relatively modest 45:24. It soon became clear that the main protagonists wouldn't let the second half be as slow as the first, as the leaders were cranking up the pace. By 14km, it was down to a group of three, with **Xihzu Lu** joining Liu and Gonzalez in front. Liu and Gonzalez increased the tempo once more, and it was eventually enough to break Lu as she resigned herself to third place. It was only in the final 40 metres that Liu dug in and strode clear of Gonzalez, winning in 1:28:35 to take her third global title, after covering the final 2km circuit in 8:11. Gonzalez finished second in 1:28:37. Mexico has previously won nine Olympic medals in men's race-walking events, but this is their first in a women's race-walking event. Lu took bronze in 1:28:42

Regan Lamble was by far the best of the Australians, finishing 9th with 1:30:28. **Tanya Holliday**, 26th with 1:34:22 and **Rachel Tallent**, 40th with 1:37:08, also gave it everything but it was just not their day.

1.	Hong Liu	CHN	1:28:35
2.	Maria Guadalupe Gonzalez	MEX	1:28:37
3.	Xiuzhi Lu	CHN	1:28:42
	...		
9.	Regan Lamble	AUS	1:30:28
26.	Tanya Holliday	AUS	1:34:22
40.	Rachel Tallent	AUS	1:37:08

Overall, the Australian walkers had done superbly, with all 8 finishing their events and four top-10 performances. The team were ably led by Jared Tallent (2nd in 50km), Dane Bird-Smith (PB 3rd in 20km), Regan Lamble (9th in 20km) and Chris Erickson (PB 10th in 50km). Add in the performances of Melbourne based NZ walkers Quentin Rew and Alana Barber and you had an impressive set of results.

Australian Winter Roadwalk Championships Mt Stromlo Forest Park, Canberra, ACT, Sunday 21st August 2016

With the Olympic walkers still in Rio, the fields for the Australian 20km Winter Championships in Canberra were sparse indeed, with **Adam Garganis** winning the men's title but with no women in action at all.

Aust 20km Winter Champ Men, Canberra, Sun 21 st Aug 2016			
1.	Adam Garganis	VIC	1:34:23
2.	Carl Gibbons	NSW	1:40:49
3.	Adam Patterson	VIC	1:57:35
4.	Matthew Griggs	ACT	1:58:16

2016 Australian 50km Championship
Fawkner Park, Melbourne, Sunday 11th December 2016

With all Rio Olympians Jared Tallent, Chris Erickson and Brendon Reading all opting to bypass the 2016 Australian 50km championship, we had only one starter in 38 year old Canberra based walker **Matthew Griggs**. But what a story it was! Matt was one of our top juniors in the late 1990s, taking bronze in the 1996 Australian U18 8km walk and silver in the 1997 Australian U20 20km, only to then give the sport away and move onto other things, including a stint living overseas in Armenia. He returned to Australia briefly in late 2015, doing a few walks with the ACT Race Walking Club before returning overseas again. He returned again in June 2016, unfit and overweight but with a plan to get back into shape – and the plan involved training for this 50km championship. His first race back on 2nd July saw him record 12:43 for a 2km roadwalk – not an auspicious start. In the intervening 5 months, he shed 15km to reduce his weight from 95kg to 80kg and came into this race hoping for a time around 4:30. Well, he nearly made it, his finish time 4:36:14 and his reward an Australian Championship gold medal. And at 38 years of age, he might well have been our oldest ever inaugural winner of this title.

Australian 50km Championship, Melbourne, Sun 11th Dec 2016			
1.	Matthew Griggs	ACT	4:36:14