

TOP FEMALE PERFORMERS IN 2010

In last week's newsletter, I published my list of the top male Australian walkers for the year, based on my take on their performances. This week it is time to focus on the women so here goes. Remember it's just my own opinion – your picks may differ!

1. Jess Rothwell

Jess Rothwell has had a mixed year, struggling with injuries at various times, but showing enough to give a glimpse of her bright future in the sport. It was not until May when she had her first race for the year and she started in style with 9th place (1:35:04) in the World Walking Cup in Mexico. A top ten finish is superb at any time but to do so after nursing a troublesome hamstring through the early part of the year is even more noteworthy. Finally free of injury, she kicked on to Europe, coming 4th two weeks later in the Na Rynek Marsz 10km roadwalk in Poland (a PB 44:05) and then 3 weeks later taking 9th in the La Coruna leg of the IAAF Racewalk Challenge Series in Spain (1:30:53), these two performances ensuring she led the Australian rankings for the year. Unfortunately the troublesome hamstring reappeared and her second half year was spent trying to get on top of it. Forced to withdraw from the Commonwealth Games, she opted eventually for surgery which hopefully will fix the issue once and for all. But still good enough on what we saw for me to rank her number one in my opinion.

2. Regan Lamble

Regan Lamble has had a stellar year and is reaping the benefits of her new life at the AIS. She started the year with a win in the World Cup U20 selection trial in Hobart in February with a PB 48:12. The following month she won the U20 10000m championship in Sydney with 48:21, thus ensuring berths in both the World Cup and World Junior teams. Her World Cup walk in May was her only disappointing (relatively) walk, coming 15th in a slow 51:16 but she bounced back the next month to PB at Albert Park with 47:15. The following week in the LBG carnival, she excelled, winning the Open 10 mile (1:19:04) and coming 2nd in the Open 5km (23:14) later the same day. Her World Junior Championship walk in Canada in July was an excellent one, coming 8th in 47:55. Back in Australia she finished off the year in fine style, improving her 10km PB to 47:03 at Albert Park in October and then beating with 1:36:40 to take 2nd in the Open 20km invitational walk at Fawkner Park in December.

3. Claire Tallent

Claire Tallent has had yet another consistent high quality year. Her first race in January saw her win the Canberra GP 5000m in a fast 22:20. From there it was onto Hobart in February to win the Australian 20km Summer Championship with an excellent 1:32:40. Her 19th place in the World Walking Cup in May in Mexico (1:39:08) was a good performance, well inside the top half of the field. Her next race at the La Coruna leg of the IAAF Racewalk Challenge Series saw her finish 10th in a PB time of 1:32:02. She then won the Australian 20km Winter Championship in Brisbane in a very good 1:33:20 to make it wins in both the Australian championships for the year. Her Commonwealth Games silver medal in October (1:36:55) and her win in the Open 20km invitational event at Fawkner Park in December (1:35:08) provided a fitting finish to what has been an excellent year.

4. Heather Carr

Heather Carr raced an amazing 48 times this year according to the RWA results website and that does not include minor masters races so it is probably well over 50 times. And even more amazingly, nearly all of them are of exceptional quality. Her PBs for the year are all W60 World Records or World Bests - check this out for a series of times and then ask yourself - could your mum walk like this: 1500m 7:18.5, 2000m 9:54.9, 3000m 15:30.7, 3km 15:19, 5000m 26:29.26, 10km 53:56, 15km 1:24:48, 20km 1:56:42. Of course this is nothing new for Heather as she has been setting Masters World Records since the W40 division and many of them still stand even now as Australian records. But even by her high standard, this has been an extraordinary year. Add to that the fact that she is a fine runner and has recently branched out to triathlons with some success.

5. Beth Alexander

Although still at school and doing Year 11, Beth found time to race 15 times during the year, a good effort overall. Her first big race for the year was in Hobart in February when she came 2nd in the U20 10km World Cup trail in a PB 49:03. Unfortunately she placed 3rd in the Australian U20 10000m walk the following month but realistically she was never going to be able to do both the World Cup and the World Junior championships, given her school commitments. Her World Cup walk in Mexico in May was outstanding, finishing 12th in trying conditions with 50:56, and this had to be the highlight of her walking year. In early August she won the Victorian U20 10km in 49:05 and then, 2 weeks later, she won the Australian U20 10km championship with 50:29. She finished off the year with a win in the U20 10km invitational event at Fawkner Park (50:46). In summary a good year given the need to mix study with training.

6. Jemima Montag

12 year old Jemima Montag has had a stellar year by any standard. March saw her win the Victorian Little Athletics U12 1500m in the super fast time of 6:56. She then won the Canberra carnival U14 2km in 9:41 in June, the Victorian Schools U14 3km (14:47) in July, was 2nd in the Victorian U14 3km roadwalk champs in 14:45 in early August, won the Victorian All Schools U14 3000m in November in a new Victorian U13 record of 14:35 and then finished the year with a win in the Australian All Schools U14 3000m in 14:59 in atrocious conditions. Her PBs are fantastic for an U13 and she looks set to have a big future.

7. Paige Hooper

18 year old Paige Hooper was completing her Year 12 this year so we waited expectantly to see how much she would race. Her first half year was excellent with 3rd in the U20 10km World Cup trial (49:26) in Hobart in February, 2nd in the Australian U20 10000m championship (49:12) in Sydney in March, along with a fast 23:19 in winning the South Australian T&F 5000m walk championship. This meant she was eligible to represent Australia in both the World Cup and World Junior competitions. Given that she was still at school, she was only allowed to choose one event and she chose the World Juniors, thus opening up a spot for Rachel Tallent who had missed the trials with injury. She contested the women's Open 10 Mile in the Canberra Carnival in June, finishing 2nd in 1:24:07 and looked in great shape coming into the World Junior championships in Canada in July. Unfortunately

she suffered a DQ (her only one for the year) in this event. She has not raced since then, presumably with head down in the books studying.

8. Amy Bettiol

15 year old Amy Bettiol is another young walker who has performed consistently well in what is a strong age group. Recording times of 14:30 (3rd in the NSW U16 3000m) and 6:58 early (1st in the NSW Little Athletics U15 1500m) early in the year, she won the Canberra carnival U16 3km in June with 14:54 and the Australian All Schools U16 3000m in December in 14:45. She did not contest the Australian roadwalk championships in August in Brisbane and this is the only blank in an otherwise great year.

9. Rachel Tallent

Rachel Tallent had a bad start to the year, aggravating a shin in January and not being able to race until late April. Her 25th place walk in the U20 10km in the World Cup in May (56:19) was all she could manage after such a limited preparation. She then won the Canberra Carnival U18 5km (25:17) in June, improved to 24:02 in winning the Victorian Country U18 5km in early August and then won the U18 5km in the Australian Roadwalk champs in Brisbane in late August (25:12). She finished off the season on a high with a win in the U18 5km in the Australian All Schools in December (25:15). A combination of early season injuries along with the need to knuckle down for her Year 12 studies meant that Rachel did not reach the heights of 2009 but she did enough to hold off the opposition. She has now accepted an AIS scholarship and we look forward to seeing what happens in 2011.

10. Cheryl Webb

Cheryl started her year off well with 2nd in the Australian 20km championship in Hobart in February (1:33:28), thus gaining World Cup and Commonwealth Games selection. Unfortunately disqualified in the World Cup in May, she bounced back for 11th in the Na Rynek Marsz 10km Roadwalk two weeks later (47:14) but was then disqualified in La Coruna Leg of the IAAF Racewalk Challenge Series the following month. She ended the year on a good note with 5th in the Commonwealth Games (1:42:03) but it was a mixed bag of a year for her.

Apart from these top ten, there are a number of other walkers who deserve special note. It has been a hard year to choose with so many walkers excelling.

Kelly Ruddick

Kelly has been one of the big improvers of the year, recording PBs over all distances - 2000m 8:57, 3000m 13:52, 5km 23:26, 10km 47:09 and 20km 1:40:11. Her highlights included 2nd in the Victorian 15km (1:12:02), 1st in the Victorian 10km (47:09), 3rd (second Australian) in the National Roadwalk championships in Brisbane in August (1:42:32) and 2nd in the Open 20km Invitational event at Fawkner Park (1:40:11).

Jillian Hosking

It is a bit hard to put someone in when that walker has only had 2 serious races for the year and that is where Jillian Hosking found herself this year. She was in great form early in the year, recording 22:35 in coming 2nd in the Canberra Grand Prix 5000m walk in January, then coming 3rd in the Australian 20km road championship in Hobart in March with a huge PB time of 1:34:13 (and a 10km PB of 46:10 along the way). This gained her selection for the World Cup. Unfortunately, a nagging injury curtailed her from then on and she was eventually forced into an operation late in the year to fix it. Hopefully 2011 will see this talented young 23 year old back in action.

Jmara Hockley-Samon

15 year old Jmara Hockley-Samon has vied with Amy Bettiol for the title of our top U16 girl this year and her times have been excellent. A hard working walker, she has raced 32 times in races listed on the RWA website. She started off the year in fine form with silvers in the Australian U16 3000m (14:23) and U18 5000m (25:52) in Sydney in March, then whipped out a quick 6:57 in winning the Victorian Little Aths U15 1500m a week later. She was second to Amy Bettiol in the Canberra Carnival U16 3km (15:05) but took gold in the Australian U16 5km roadwalk championship in August in Brisbane (25:59). She had to lower her colours again to Amy in the Australian All Schools U16 3000m in December (15:03). A great year for Jmara.

Tanya Holliday

It was fantastic to see Tanya Holliday back in action this year after a couple of years off. Her first race was in late May (28:43 for 6km) in Adelaide and two weeks later she burst out of the blocks to win the Open 5km at the Canberra Carnival with a great 22:56. Back in Adelaide, she recorded 47:40 for the 10km roadwalk and then won the RWA 10km with 48:31 at the Australian roadwalking championships in Brisbane in August. A good start back from a very talented walker.



Jess Rothwell, Regan Lamble, Claire Tallent, Heather Carr and Beth Alexander in action in 2010



Jemima Montag, Paige Hooper, Amy Bettiol, Rachel Tallent and Cheryl Webb