

TIM'S TOP TEN WOMEN FOR 2014

This week I focus on our women and select my Top Ten Australians for the year. As for my selections for the men in last week's newsletter, it is very much my own individual picks based on a combination of absolute quality, consistency across the year and improvement relative to past years. Of course, your picks might differ. Anyway, read on. As usual, it was a very tough task.

	<p>1. Tanya Holliday 26 year old Tanya suffered an early season setback with a DQ in the Australian Summer 20km champs in Hobart in February but bounced back with some excellent 5000m walks in March and April (21:36 and 21:41). A win in the Australian 10,000m track championship in Melbourne (45:08) was followed by 39th place in the IAAF World Cup in China (1:32:26). For the second year in a row, she doubled in the LBG Carnival in Canberra in June, winning the 10 Mile (1:14:52) and the 5km (22:07). Further good 20km walks in August (1:33:07) and in December (1:36:57) in Melbourne cemented her place as our top performing woman for the year.</p>
	<p>2. Kelly Ruddick 41 year old elly Ruddick was a very close second to Tanya, amazing us with her W40 record performances. Starting the year with a 13:16 3000m in Ballarat in January, she won the Australian 20km Summer championship in Hobart (1:34:44) and took a very good 7th in the IAAF Challenge event in Chihuahua, Mexico (1:39:24) in Mexico, was second to Tanya in the Queensland Track Classic 5000m (21:46) in March, walked 45:25 in the Australian 10,000m track championship in April and finally walked 1:34:00 for 49th in the IAAF World Cup in Taicang, China, in May. What a fantastic 5 month period. The second half of her year was very quiet with only a few appearances and no major championship starts but she did enough in the first half to cement her place at the top.</p>
	<p>3. Clara Smith 16 year old Clara had some great battles with Jemima Montag in the early part of the year but drew clear when it counted. She was second to Jemima in the World Cup Junior 10km trial in Hobart in Feb in a PB 48:17, second to her again in the Australian U17 5000m in Sydney in March (23:30) but bridged the gap as the first Australian to finish in the IAAF World Cup in Taicang in May (8th with 46:33). She also walked well in the 4 Day Lake Taihu Rally in China in October and won the Australian All-Schools U18 5000m championship in December (23:24) to round out a very successful year which also included PBs at 3km (12:52) and 5000m (22:42).</p>
	<p>4. Jemima Montag 16 year old started the year explosively, winning the World Cup U20 10km trial in Hobart with a huge PB of 47:00 in February. A further win in the Victorian U17 5000m (22:32) was also a leading U20 time. She then upped the ante, winning both the U17 5000m (22:43) and the U20 10,000m (48:25) at the Australian Junior T&F Champs in March. Alas, she was carrying an injury by the time the IAAF World Cup came around in May and she had to be content with 12th place in a time of 47:34. She had the winter off to recover and did not reappear until the current summer season, doing some Victorian Shield comps and then taking second behind Clara in the Australian All-Schools U18 5000m in Adelaide (23:58).</p>
	<p>5. Heather Carr The amazing Heather Carr turned 65 in August 2014 and is now busy rewriting the W65 World and Australian walking records, just as she has done in every Masters age group since she started in the W35 division. She started the year with 3 golds in the Oceania Masters Champs in Geelong in early January, won 3 golds in the Australian Masters Champs in Hobart in March and raced locally in Victoria all year, never failing to finish and always finishing in times that are outstanding for her age. Her yearly bests read excellently - 7:47 (1500m), 16:28 (3000m), 28:09 (5000m), 58:31 (10km) and 2:08:54 (20km).</p>
	<p>6. Michelle Thompson 45 year old Michelle is our dominant ultra distance walker, far ahead of any other women and bettering our ultra men on just about every occasion into the bargain. Her one appearance in racewalking circles was in January when she recorded 2:02:05 for a VRWC 20km event at Middle Park. Apart from that, she focused on the more traditional longer distances, winning the Caboolture Dawn to Dusk 12 Hour in February (96.054km), winning the Coburg 6 Hour Championships in March (55.731km) and winning the Coburg 24 Hour Championship in April with an astonishing 190.984 km (the second longest distance ever walked in Australia behind the late great Jim Gleeson). Her performance in this race saw her set new Australian women's records for 12 Hours, 100km, 100 miles and 24 Hours. She next fronted in the Australian Centurions 12 Hour in Melbourne in October, winning easily with 101.660 km. Her year finished with a great win in the Malaysian International 12 Hour walk in Seramban in December, her official time of 115km unfortunately incorrect but still a huge walk.</p>
	<p>7. Eliza Clarke 14 year old Eliza moved up from U14 to U16 this year and made her presence felt immediately.</p>

	<p>She started the year with a win in the Victorian 5km Open Teams Roadwalk in Melbourne in January (25:36), won the U15 3000m at the Australian Junior Champs in Sydney in March (14:44), won the U14 1500m walk at the Victorian Little Athletics Champs (6:40) that same month and set a whole swag of PBs as the summer progressed. She was 4th in the LBG U16 3km (15:04), won the U16 3000m (13:41) at the Australian All-Schools in Adelaide in December and continued to chip away at her PBs as the current summer unfolded. A hugely talented walker with a big future.</p>
	<p>8. Beki Smith 28 year old Beki finally returned to competition in June of this year, a year after the birth of her first child. The 2012 Olympian took a good second in the LBG 10 Mile walk in Canberra in 1:20:12, then won the NSW 20km State Championship in July (1:36:38) before finishing off the year with a win at Fawkner Park in December (20km in 1:35:37). Only 3 races for the year but a welcome comeback after 2 years away from the sport.</p>
	<p>E9. Nicole Fagan 25 year old Nicole was a DNF in the Australian 20km Summer Championships in Hobart in February but bounced back well, winning 5000m walks at the NSW Champs and at the Sydney All-Comers meet (22:27 and 22:37). She finished off her summer season with an inspired second place behind Tanya in the Australian 10,000m track championship in Melbourne in April (45:21). She completed a good double at the LBG Carnival in Canberra in June, winning the Open 10km (48:17) and taking second in the Open 5km (23:00). She then recorded two good 20km times, first in winning the NSW championship in July (1:37:45) and then winning the Australian 20km Winter Championship in Albany in August (1:41:07). Her last two races for the year were a win in the Australian University Games in Sydney in Sept (24:31 for 5000m) and 4th in the 20km invitational race at Fawkner Park in December (1:43:01). Overall, a good year.</p>
	<p>E9. Stephanie Stigwood 24 year old Stephanie raced only sparsely this year but, when she did race, the results were good. She started the year with 2nd in the Australian 20km Summer champs with a PB 1:37:39. She followed this up with another good walk, this time in Nomi, Japan, in March, coming 14th in 1:39:01. A very good 23:05 in the Tasmanian Open 5000m track championship that same month (23:05) set the stage for a great year. Alas, she was a DNF in the Australian 10,000m championship in Melbourne in April and then she did not race again nationally until fronting at Fawkner Park in December, coming 3rd with 1:40:03.</p>
	<p>E10. Tayla-Paige Billington 17 year old Tayla had done 49:08 in December 2013 at Fawkner Park so was one of the front contenders for 2014 international selections. Unfortunately, her 2014 trials did not go well – DNF in the World Cup U20 trial in February and a distant 9th in the World Junior trial in March with 55:08. The selectors took into account her health issues during this period and still selected her for the IAAF World Junior champs. She bounced back with 5km times of 24:17 and 24:26 in May/June but it was not until July in Oregon where she hit her straps, coming 18th in the World Junior champs in a PB 48:40. She made very few appearances in the second half of the year, the best of them being 4th place in the Australian All-Schools champs in Adelaide in December (25:06). So a patchy year by her usually high standards but a major highlight mid year in the World Juniors.</p>
	<p>E10. Jasmine Dighton 18 year old Jasmine started the year explosively, taking third place behind Jemima and Clara in the World Cup trial in Hobart in Feb, her time of 49:11 a big PB. She then backed up for 2nd in the World Juniors trial in Sydney in March (50:39). With selectors advising that school aged walkers could only walk in one of the two internationals, she was duly selected for the World Junior Championships in July. Alas, the pressures of year 12, combined with a number of niggling injuries meant that she could not replicate this form as the year progressed. Her 6th place in the LBG Open 5km (24:57) was slower than she had hoped and her subsequent DQ in Eugene in July was a shattering experience. She then put her head down for Y12 studies and did not race again until December. A classic case of how hard it is to mix a successful racing year with a year of intense academic study. She is currently at our Falls Creek camp and keen to get back to full fitness once again.</p>