TIM'S TOP TEN WOMEN FOR 2016

This week I focus on our women and select my Top Ten Australians for the year. As with 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.



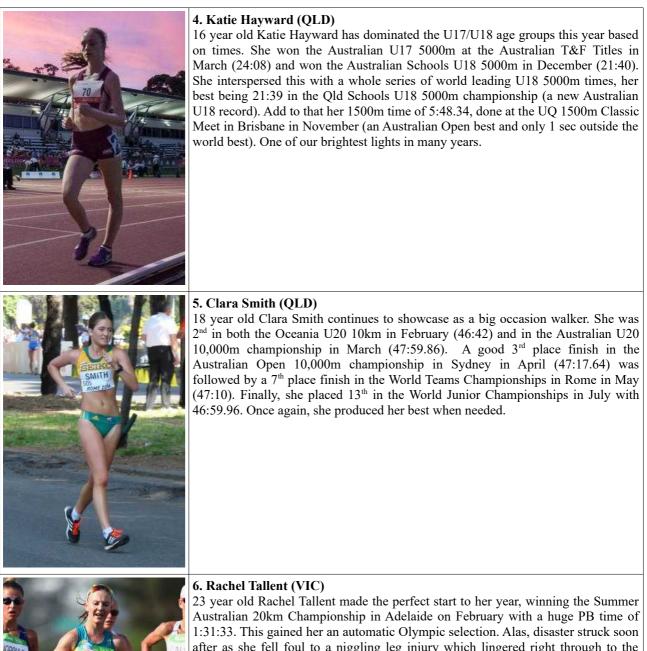


30 year old Beki Smith was yet another of the top women vying for Olympic selection. She finished 3rd in the 2016 Summer 20km Championship in Adelaide in February (1:32:49) but then upped the ante with wins and PBs in the Melbourne Track Classic 5000m (21:19) and the Australian 10,000m Championship (43:48). An excellent 15th in the World Teams Championships in May (a big PB of 1:29:49) saw her right in contention for the final Olympic spot. The selectors went with Tanya Holliday so for Beki, it was a case of year over. She reappeared in December with a win in the Fawkner Park 20km (1:33:54) so it is good to see her continuing on after such a disappointment.



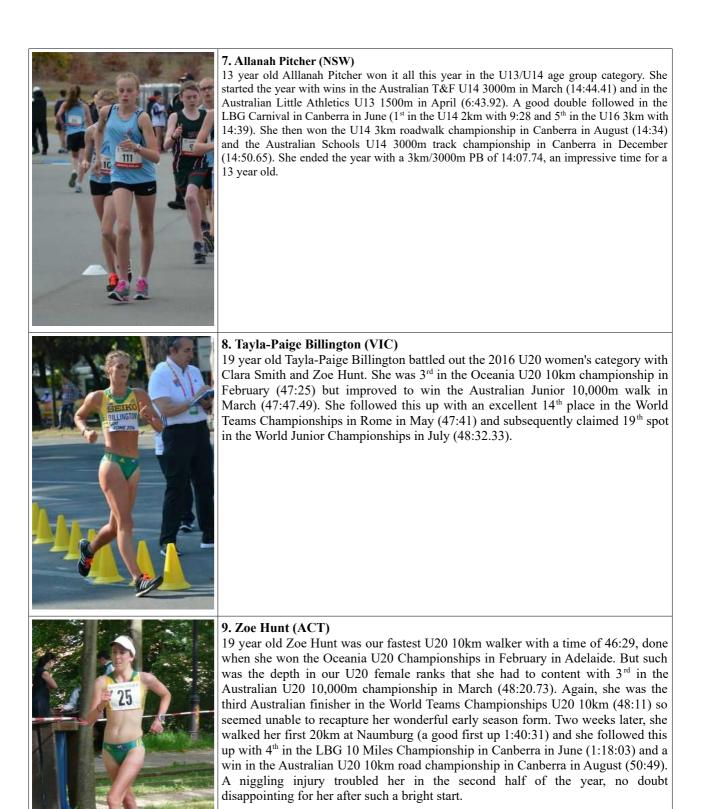
E2. Tanya Holliday (SA)

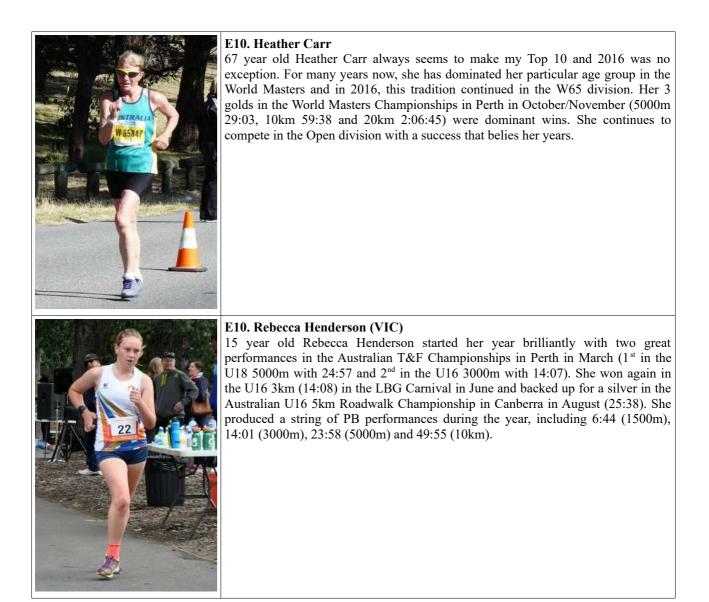
27 year old Tanya Holliday was second in the 2016 Summer 20km championships in 1:32:15, 2nd in the Melbourne track classic 5000m in 21:44 and 2nd in the Australian 10,000m championship in 44:33. She then walked excellently in the Racewalking World Teams Championships in Rome in May, coming 16th in 1:29:56.a big PB. She then won the 10 Miles / 5km double at the LBG Carnival in June in Canberra (1:12:58 and 21:27). Finally she finished a good 26th in the Rio Olympics with 1:34:22. Another excellent year.





23 year old Rachel Tallent made the perfect start to her year, winning the Summer Australian 20km Championship in Adelaide on February with a huge PB time of 1:31:33. This gained her an automatic Olympic selection. Alas, disaster struck soon after as she fell foul to a niggling leg injury which lingered right through to the Olympics. She did race in the World Teams Championships in May but had to be content with 41st in 1:34:16. She was second to Tanya Holliday in both the 10 Mile and 5km in the LBG Carnival in Canberra (1:13.22 and 21:31) so seemed to be coming good. Unfortunately, her injury worries resurfaced again while training in St Moritz and she was forced to walk in Rio in obvious pain. Her 20km finish place of 40th (1:37:08) was obviously very disappointing for her. She has been slowly rehabilitating since then but we expect to see her back in action as 2017 progresses.





As usual, this list was both hard to prune and even harder to rank. There were other strong contenders who could have made the list in other years – Zahra Hayes, Philippa Huse, Caitlin Hannigan, Michelle Thompson – but this year was particularly strong.