

TIM'S TOP TEN WOMEN FOR 2018

It's that time of the year again so off we go with my Top Ten Women for 2018. These are 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 always, it was a very tough ask.



E1. Claire Tallent (SA)

36 year old Claire Tallent started her year with silver in the Australian 10,000m track walk in Canberra in January (46:06.59) and bronze in the Australian 20km Championship in Adelaide in February (1:31:29). She was on target for a win in the Commonwealth Games 20km in Queensland in April until disqualified with only 2km to go. She bounced back in the best possible way with bronze in the IAAF Race Walking Team Championships 50km with an Australian, Oceania and Commonwealth record of 4:09:33. After a good break, she fronted for the annual 3 day Lake Taihu rally in September, coming 17th overall after a solid 3 days of walking. Her year finished with a win in the inaugural Australian women's 50km championship at Fawkner Park in December (4:28:52). At a time when other walkers might be considering retirement, and with young son Harvey in tow, Claire has found a new lease of life and has quickly carved a place at the top of the newly minted women's 50km world.



E1. Jemima Montag (VIC)

20 year old Jemima Montag had a year which unfolded similarly to Claire and it has been impossible for me to split the two. 2018 started with bronze in the Australian 10,000m track walk in Canberra in January (46:18.42) and silver in the Australian 20km Championship in Adelaide in February (1:31:26). In March, she won the Victorian 5000m track title with a sizzling 21:32.68 and in April she won the Commonwealth Games 20km walk in Queensland in very tough conditions (1:32:50). Alas, the superb string of races was broken with a DQ in the IAAF World Team Championships in China in May and it was not until the summer season that we saw her again, once her university year had completed. She finished 2018 with a win in the Fawkner Park 20km in December (1:35:48) and looks on track to kickstart 2019 in similar form to 12 months ago. Aged only 20, she has a superb future.



3. Katie Hayward (QLD)

18 year old Katie Hayward, then aged 17, started the year with a whole swag of high quality 10,000m/10km races - 4th in the Australian Open 10,000m track championship in Canberra in January (47:05.36), 1st in the Oceania 10km championship in Adelaide (PB 45:57) and 1st in the Queensland 10,000m championship (46:47.0) in February and gold in the Australian U20 10,000m track championship in Sydney in March (PB 45:48.51). Sadly she was disqualified when fighting it out for the medals in the IAAF World Team Championships in China in May but bounced back in the IAAF World U20 Championships in Tampere in July, with a 5th place PB of 45:10.42). She finished her racing year with a win in the U20 10km championship (49:37) at the Australian Roadwalk Championships in Queensland. By far and away, our best U20 walker.



4. Lyn Ventris (WA)

62 year old Lyn Ventris won World Masters Championship golds in the W60 5000m track walk (26:15), in the W60 10km roadwalk (53:26 – W60 World Record) and in the W60 20km roadwalk (1:58:27) in Spain in September. She was without question the outstanding female walker of the meet, with superb performances in all 3 events in torrid conditions. After suffering a severe hamstring injury in 2012 and eventually opting for major surgery, it has been a very long road to recovery. She did not return to racing until 2015 but recurring injuries since then postponed her return to her World Record breaking form for which she had been renowned. Finally, in the Australian Masters Championships in Perth in April, she scorched around the track in the women's 5000m walk, her time of 25:41.58 bettering the W60 World Record by an amazing 28 seconds. The 3 golds in Malaga and her further World Record in the 10km roadwalk there provide confirmation that "she is back!" It has been a long battle but she never gave up.



5. Kelly Ruddick (VIC)

46 year old Kelly Ruddick impresses, year after year. She started 2018 with 7th place in the Australian 20km Summer Championship in Adelaide (1:37:24), not too bad for a W45 athlete. She dominated the Victorian winter season with wins in the women's AV 10km (48:36) and 15km (1:14:27) and in the Open 30km (2:37:36). This was her first outing over the 30km distance and she set new Australian and Victorian W45 records. She also set a couple of interesting firsts – the first woman ever to win this championship, as well as the first walker to get 3 votes from EVERY judge (6 in total) in our VRWC style award competition. She finished her year with her first ever 50km, coming second to Claire Tallent in the Australian women's 50km championship at Fawkner Park (4:54:31), yet another W45 world record. The world's top W45 walker and still one of our top open women.



6. Rebecca Henderson (VIC)

17 year old Rebecca Henderson mixes walking with triathlons and long distance swimming and is a very busy girl. Consequently, we see less of her as a walker than might otherwise be the case, but when she does appear, she competes strongly. She interrupted her main summer swimming season to take second place in the Oceania U20 10km in Adelaide in February (49:02) and pushed out a fast 23:11 in a VRWC 5000m track race in Melbourne a week later. A further week on, she won the U18 5000m walk at the Australian Junior T&F Championships in Sydney (24:38) and then came 4th in the U20 10,000m walk at the same meet (51:22). She was our top finisher in the IAAF World Team Championships in China in May (16th with 49:25) and is now back racing in the Victorian Shield summer season after a winter of school study and triathlon. Definitely our top U18 walker.



7. Alanna Peart (VIC)

Alanna Peart was our top U16 walker for 2018. She started the year with a good double in the Australian Junior T&F Championships in Sydney, with seconds in the U17 5000m (25:30) and in the U16 3000m (13:58). She won the U16 3km at the LBG Carnival in Canberra in June (14:02) and won the U16 5km at the Australian Roadwalk Champs in Queensland in August (24:26). She did not contest the Australian All Schools Champs in December but would have been competitive. She finished the year with PBs of 6:36 (1500m), 13:57 (3km), 23:39 (5km) and 51:02 (10km), all set in 2018. Not bad for a 15 year old!



8. Alexandra Griffin (WA)

13 year old Alexandra Griffin She started her national year with a strong double; wins in the U14 3000m (14:38) and in the U15 3000m (14:21) at the Australian T&F Championships in Sydney in March, followed 2 weeks later with second place in the Australian Little Athletics National Championships in Queensland (6:52.46). She also won the Australian Roadwalk Championships U14 3km in Queensland in August (14:18). Obviously, with the cost of travelling from Perth, you can't compete in every meet, but she did enough to confirm her spot as our top U14 walker.



9. Beki Smith (NSW)

32 year old Beki Smith started the year with wins in the Australian 10,000m track championship in Canberra in January (45:56.08) and in the Australian 20km Championship in Adelaide in February (1:31:23). She won the Queensland Track Classic 3000m in March with a swift 12:48.70 and went into the Commonwealth Games 20km in April as one of the favourites. Alas, things do not always go according to plan, and she fell back in the torrid conditions, finishing sixth with 1:40:41. This marked the end of her competitive year, with her withdrawal from the IAAF World Team Championships team.



10. Rachel Tallent (VIC)

25 year old Rachel Tallent maintained her position as one of our top open women, even if her results were down on previous years. 2019 started with 5th place in the Australian Road Championships in Adelaide in February (1:35:18). She competed in the IAAF World Team Championships in China in May, finishing 59th with 1:36:34. She then took the double at the LBG Carnival in Canberra in June, with firsts in the Open 15km (1:14:58) and the Open 5km (23:04). Finally, she won the Winter Roadwalk Championships 20km in Queensland in August (1:36:27). Consistent but probably below her own high personal standards.



11. Darcey Roberts (VIC)

Hey, I often find it hard to keep my picks to a basic 10. This year I had to include 11 year old Darcey Roberts who is by far and away our best U12 walker and who is amongst our best U14 walkers. She scored a big triple at the LBG Carnival in Canberra in June - golds in the U12 2km (10:02) and U14 2km (9:58) and fifth in the U18 5km (29:19). Too young to be allowed to walk in the U14 3km at the Australian Roadwalk Championships in August, she won the U12 2km with 10:03. Setting a swathe through the VRWC U12 club records, she finished the year with PBs of 9:53 (2km), 15:44 (3km) and 29:19 (5km).

The following walkers were also considered but missed the final cut. It is never easy to get down to the final 10 (or 11)!

Philippa Huse (VIC), Allannah Pitcher (NSW), Emma Blanch (NSW), Caitlin Hannigan (QLD) and Jayda Anderson (QLD)

You can check out this year's and all past year's Top Ten's at <http://www.vrwc.org.au/TopTen.shtml>.