

REVIEWING THE AUSTRALIAN MEN 1500M WALK

It is hard to find much in the way of statistical information about the 1500m Walk as it has never really been regarded as an international distance. Swedish statistician Birger Fält lists the 1500m walk World Bests as follows

Outdoor 1500m	5:12.0	Antanas Grigaliunas	LTU	05/12/1990	Vilnius, LTU
Indoor 1500m	5:13.53	Tim Lewis	USA	02/13/1988	East Rutherford, USA

Years ago, the British and their colonial allies (like us!) used to maintain One Mile Walk records and it is there that our story starts.

The 1950 Australian Athletic Union (AAU) Almanac records Don Keane as having set a new Australian Junior 1 Mile Walk record of 6:46.8 (Perth, 12/02/1949). A split time had obviously been taken in that race as two years later the 1952 Almanac added an Australian Junior 1500m Walk record time of 6:21.8, accorded to Don and with the same time and date. This is the first time that an Australian almanac had included the 1500m walk amongst its statistics.

Don Keane	Australian Junior 1500m	6:21.8	Perth, WA	12/02/1949
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Over the next 28 years, the almanac documented the progress of the Australian Junior 1500m Walk record as it dipped below 6 mins.

Ross Haywood	Australian Junior 1500m	6:12.4	Melbourne, VIC	29/01/1966
Steve Hausfeld	Australian Junior 1500m	6:09.7	Sydney, NSW	21/11/1970
Rod Huxley	Australian Junior 1500m	6:06.9	Sydney, NSW	20/11/1977
Peter Stubbs	Australian Junior 1500m	5:56.6	Sydney, NSW	10/02/1979

It must be noted that the rigorous judging of the times precluded super fast times. You could only walk as fast as the rules and the judges of the time allowed!

In the late 1970s, an Australian Open 1500m Walk record category was announced and the event took on a new significance. With State Interclub competitions regularly held over 1500m and 3000m, there were plenty of opportunities to put 1500m times on the board and it was two Victorians, David Smith and Willi Sawall, who led the pack, swapping the record between them.

David Smith	Open	5:38.4	Melbourne, VIC	08/12/1979
David Smith	Open	5:32.0	Adelaide, SA	22/12/1979
Willi Sawall	Open	5:30.8	Melbourne VIC	23/01/1980
David Smith	Open	5:27.5	Melbourne VIC	08/11/1980
David Smith	Open	5:19.1	Melbourne VIC	07/02/1981

Eventually youth won out against age with David's time of 5:19.1, set in February 1981. This time stood untouched until the Australian 1500m Walk record category was eventually removed by Athletics Australia in 2003. Interestingly, David did record an even faster time of 5:12 in Sydney soon after this. Alas, it was never ratified as a record due to an insufficient number of judges.

From the early eighties onwards, the records tumbled regularly, with a further U17 division now added. The 1982 almanac read

David Smith	Open	5:19.1	Melbourne, VIC	07/02/1981
Bill Dyer	U19	5:46.2	Melbourne, VIC	07/03/1981
Alan Muir	U17	5:58.2	Sydney, NSW	31/01/1980

Rather than step through year by year from here, the new records are reproduced below in the order in which they occurred (note the change to U20, U18 and U16).

Andrew Jachno	U20	5:37.5	Melbourne, VIC	06/03/1982
Paul Copeland	U18	5:59.1	Melbourne, VIC	06/03/1984
Nick A'Hern	U18	5:56.8	Sydney, NSW	27/10/1984
Nick A'Hern	U18	5:48.6	Sydney, NSW	05/11/1986
Greg Topperwein	U16	5:56.38	Adelaide, SA	14/09/1987
Matthew O'Donnell	U16	5:51.6	Sydney, NSW	15/11/1989
Greg Robertson	U20	5:32.0	Hobart, TAS	04/01/1989
Dion Russell	U18	5:38.8	Melbourne, VIC	26/10/1992
Wayne McEwan	U16	5:47.7	Hobart, TAS	27/03/1994
Stephen Brooks	U16	5:42.68	Adelaide, SA	26/03/1995

In the 1998 almanac, all but the U16 record were removed and finally in 2003, the Open, U20 and U18 records were decommissioned by Athletics Australia. At the time of decommissioning, the Australian records read as follows

David Smith	Open	5:19.1	Melbourne	07/02/1981
Greg Robertson	U20	5:32.0	Hobart	04/01/1989
Dion Russell	U18	5:38.8	Melbourne	26/10/1992
Stephen Brooks	U16	5:42.58	Adelaide	26/03/1995

Since then, any statistics gathering for the 1500m walk has been unofficial at best. Some points are worth commenting on at this stage before I move onto my very unofficial ranking list.

- On 7th February 1991, Andrew Jachno recorded 10:56.22 for the 3000m walk at the NEC Classic meeting at Olympic Park in Melbourne. This was an Australian and Commonwealth record (it still stands today) and it averages out at 5:28 per 1500m split.
- Luke Adams was not far behind with his 10:59.04, recorded in Cork, Ireland, in 2010. Again, this corresponds to successive 1500m splits at sub 5:30 pace.
- Jared Tallent's 5000m National Record of 18:41.83 also confirms his pure speed. But he does not have a 1500m time that I have been able to find.
- Nathan Deakes recorded a 1500m time of 5:22.1 in his last official 1500m walk in 1997 (he was aged 19 at the time). What could he have done if he attempted another one later in his career!
- David Smith had an even faster time of 5:12, done in Sydney. I don't have details on that one so have to go with his 5:19 at this stage.

So this list is probably incomplete! The times for Andrew Jachno, Dion Russell, Simon Baker and Nick A'Hern are obviously nowhere near their bests and Jared Tallent is missing completely. Further, the list does not include the many wonderful NSW walkers of the last 20 years - Troy Sundstrom, Douglas Connolly, Brent Vallance, Luke Adams and Adam Rutter to name a few. But you go with what you have, so here is my ranking list.

Rank	Time	Name	State	Location	Date	Age
1	05:16.4	Dane Bird-Smith	QLD	Brisbane, QLD	07/11/2013	U23
2	05:19.1	David Smith	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	07/02/1981	Open
3	05:19.5	Jesse Osborne	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	23/03/2014	U20
4	05:22.1	Nathan Deakes	VIC	Geelong, VIC	18/10/1997	U23
5	05:29.0	Rhydian Cowley	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	12/12/2012	U23
6	05:30.8	Willi Sawall	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	23/01/1980	Open
7	05:32.0	Jesse Osborne	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	16/10/2013	U20
8	5.32.0	Greg Robertson	TAS	Hobart, TAS	04/01/1989	U20
9	05:36.0	Chris Erickson	VIC	Sydney, NSW	28/02/2009	Open
10	05:36.6	Tim Erickson	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	08/11/1980	Open
11	05:37.5	Andrew Jachno	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	06/03/1982	U20
12	05:38.8	Dion Russell	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	26/10/1992	U18
13	05:41.9	Brad Aiton	QLD	Southport, QLD	17/12/2011	U18
14	05:42.7	Stephen Brooks	VIC	Adelaide, SA	26/03/1995	U16
15	05:42.6	Nick Dewar	QLD	Brisbane, QLD	07/11/2013	U23
16	05:42.5	Brandon Dewar	QLD	Brisbane, QLD	04/10/2010	U20
17	05:43.8	Daniel Thorne	VIC	Geelong, VIC	07/03/1998	U19
18	05:45.0	David Cash	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	08/11/1980	Open
19	05:45.0	Simon Baker	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	02/12/1983	Open
20	05:46.2	Bill Dyer	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	07/02/1981	U19
21	05:47.7	Wayne McEwan		Hobart, TAS	27/03/1994	U16
22	05:48.6	Nick A'Hern	NSW	Sydney, NSW	05/11/1986	U18
23	05:50.2	Steve Beecroft	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	25/10/1988	U18
24	05:51.5	Nathan Brill	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	23/10/2012	U17
25	05:52.0	Barry Birchenall	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	04/12/1980	U20
26	05:54.4	Declan Tingay	WA	Perth, WA	21/03/2015	16
27	05:54.9	Tyler Jones	NSW	Sydney, NSW	07/09/2013	U16
28	05:56.0	Shaun Bubb		Geelong, VIC	07/12/1991	U17
29	05:56.4	Greg Topperwein		Adelaide, SA	14/09/1987	U16
30	05:58.0	Martin Richardson	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	22/01/1983	Open
31	05:58.1	Emmet Brasier	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	20/10/2015	17
32	05:58.2	Alan Muir	NSW	Sydney, NSW	31/01/1980	U17
33	05:59.0	Kim Mottrom	SA	Adelaide, SA	22/01/2014	Open
34	05:59.1	Paul Copeland	VIC	Melbourne, VIC	06/03/1984	U18

I welcome any feedback to enhance this list - name, performance, venue, event, date.

In finishing, I would love to be trackside to see what I regard as my top 6 lining up against each other in a 1500m walk - in alphabetical order: Andrew Jachno, Dane Bird-Smith, David Smith, Jared Tallent, Luke Adams and Nathan Deakes. It will never happen as they span different eras but it makes for intriguing speculation.



Andrew Jachno: 10:56.22 for 3000m



Dane Bird-Smith: 5:16.39 for 1500m



David Smith: 5:12 for 1500m



Jared Tallent: 18:41.83 for 5000m



Luke Adams: 10:59.04 for 3000m



Nathan Deakes: 5:22.1 for 1500m age 19

REVIEWING THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN 1500M WALK

As for the men, it is hard to find much in the way of statistical information about the women's 1500m Walk as it has never really been regarded as an international distance. Swedish statistician Birger Fält lists the women's 1500m walk World Bests as follows

World best outdoor:	5:47.03	Kjersti Tysse-Plätzer	NOR	01/09/2002	Knarvik, NOR
World best indoor:	5:53.41	Debbi Lawrence	USA	15/10/1993	Hamilton, USA

From an Australian perspective, the early Athletics Australia yearly almanacs do not provide any information of the then holders of the 'best time' as women's Track and Field was separately administered up until the last seventies. The first yearly almanac which actually includes the women's 1500m records was 1982. The records at that time read

Sue Cook	Open	6:19.0	Melbourne, VIC	08/11/1980
Sally Pierson	U20/U18	6:32.4	Melbourne, VIC	08/11/1980
Anne Miller	U16	6:32.6	Melbourne, VIC	05/02/1978

But an indepth review does shed some light on earlier holders of the 'best time'. The first discussion I can find is from the 1972 National Women's T&F Championships when NSW walker Diane Behan set a new women's 1500m world track walk record of 6:49.2. Victorian walker Alison Nichols was also under the old record in finishing 2nd with 6:54.7.

Di Behan	Open	6:49.2	Perth, WA	26/03/1972
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Things stayed as they were for another 6 years until Sue Orr (later Sue Cook) took walking to a new level with her speed and endurance. The 1500m time fell as follows

Sue Orr	Open	6:27.3	Melbourne, VIC	04/02/1978
Sue Cook	Open	6:24.0	Melbourne, VIC	12/01/1980

By 1980, Sue Cook was dominant, also holding the records for 1 Mile, 3000m, 10km, 15km and 20km distances while Sally Pierson and Anne Miller held various the underage records between them.

Since 1980, the almanacs map the record progress as follows

Sue Cook	Open	6:10.8	Canberra, ACT	21/01/1984
Gabrielle Blythe	U20/U18	6:20.2	Geelong, VIC	08/02/1986
Jane Saville	U20-U16	6:18.45	Sydney, NSW	18/02/1989
Kerry Saxby	Open	5:50.41	Sydney, NSW	20/01/1991
Jane Saville	U20/U18	6:14.3	Sydney, NSW	20/01/1991
Natalie Saville	U20-U16	6:10.78	Hobart, TAS	27/03/1994
Renee McAskill	U10-U16	5:59.15	Sydney, NSW	25/02/1996

In the 1998 almanac, all but the U16 record were removed and finally in 2003, the Open, U20 and U18 records were decommissioned by Athletics Australia. At the time of decommissioning, the Australian records read as follows

Kerry Saxby-Junna	Open	5:50.41	Sydney, NSW	20/01/1991
Renee McAskill	U20-U16	5:59.15	Sydney, NSW	25/02/1996

This time of Kerry's remained unassailable for 25 years until, on 3rd November 2016, 16 year old Katie Hayward recorded an even faster 5:48. in winning the UQ 1500m classic at the UQ Athletics Track in Brisbane. It had been a long time coming but someone had finally bettered Kerry's time. In fact, it was only 1 second shy of the world best, held by Kjersti Tysse-Plätzer of Norway.

And now onto my ranking list. As for the men, I can't guarantee that this is definitive but it is fairly comprehensive thanks to a lot of help from Paul Rance. My cutoff point has been set at 6:50.0.

Rank	Name	Time	State	Location	Comp Date	Age
1	Katie Hayward	5.48.34	QLD	Brisbane	16-11-03	16
2	Kerry Saxby-Junna	5.50.41	NSW	Sydney	20-01-91	29
3	Renee McAskill	5.59.15	NSW	Sydney	25-02-96	U16
4	Michelle French	6.09.31	NSW	Sydney	14-02-98	U16
5	Natalie Saville	6.10.78	NSW	Hobart	27-03-94	U16
6	Sue Cook	6.10.80	VIC	Canberra	21-01-84	Open
7	Jane Saville	6.14.30	NSW	Sydney	20-01-91	U18
8	Jessica Pickles	6.17.08	QLD	Brisbane	07-11-13	U20
9	Gabrielle Blythe	6.20.20	VIC	Geelong	08-02-86	U17
10	Clara Smith	6.22.21	QLD	Brisbane	06-11-14	U16
11	Linda Coffee	6.22.43	NSW	Sydney	21-03-93	U16
12	Cheryl Webb	6.23.43	NSW		'92 Aust Titles	U16
13	Kate Connolly	6.31.45	NSW	Perth	/03/99 Aust Titles	U16
14	Jillian Hosking	6.31.67	ACT	Hobart	08-12-02	U16

15	Jemima Montag	6.31.70	VIC	Melbourne	02-02-13	U15
16	Anne Miller	6.32.60	VIC	Melbourne	05-02-78	U15
17	Amber Lawrence	6.33.38	NSW	Sydney	21-03-93	U16
18	Maureen O'Brien	6.33.44	WA	Sydney	21-03-93	U16
19	Shannon Jennings	6.35.3	NSW	Sydney	19-03-06	U16
20	Zoe Hunt	6.36.0	ACT	Canberra	05-03-15	U18
21	Marcia Lomas	6.36.17	WA		1991 Aust Titles	U16
22	Nyssa Cobby	6.36.73	WA	Perth	/03/99 Aust Titles	U16
23	Kellie Wapshott	6.37.03	VIC	Sydney	09-12-95	U16
24	Laura Johnson	6.38.13	NSW	Sydney	/12/99	U16
25	Eliza Clarke	6.38.7	VIC	Doncaster	10-12-15	U16
26	Papadopoulos, Christina	06:38.98	QLD	Brisbane	16-11-03	20
27	Lisa McIlvenie	6.39.18	NSW	Sydney	13-10-96	U14
28	Tanya Holliday	6.39.20	SA	Hobart	08-12-02	U16
29	Jane Henderson	6.39.50	VIC	Geelong	07-12-91	U15
30	Bridgitte Burns	6.39.97	VIC	Sydney	07-05-00	U16
31	Claire Bock	6.41.48	QLD	Melbourne	23-03-96	U14
32	Jasmyn McDonald	6.41.62	NSW	Sydney	07-09-13	U15
33	Jasmine Dighton	6.41.91	NSW	Sydney	23-03-14	U18
34	Erin McGinniskin	6.42.12	VIC	Melbourne	23-03-96	U13
35	Tiffany Charman	6.42.55	VIC	Melbourne	/03/92	U14
36	Yolanda Russell	6.43.30	VIC	Darwin	05-04-92	U16
37	Alana McIlvenie	6.43.51	NSW	Sydney	07-09-96	U16
38	Deborah Foster	6.43.58	TAS	Adelaide	25-03-95	U16
39	Claire Maddison	6.43.6	SA	Adelaide	06-03-93	U16
40	Sarah Gathercole	6.43.94	VIC	Melbourne	/03/92	U14
41	Tenyka Chapman	6.44.02	QLD	Brisbane	05-11-2015	U14
42	Helen Sestic	6.45.53	NSW	Adelaide	25-03-95	U16
43	Roxie Schmidt	6.45.71	QLD	Canberra	/12/98	U16
44	Jessica Rothwell	6.45.88	VIC	Melbourne	03-04-14	U16
45	Gabby Hunt	6.46.0	ACT	Canberra	28-01-2016	U16
46	Melissa Scott	6.46.11	VIC	Melbourne	27-02-93	U16
47	Jade Newell	6.46.65	NSW	Brisbane	23-03-97	U16
48	Elizabeth Hosking	6.47.16	ACT	Canberra	03-11-14	U16
49	Rebecca Wilkie	6.48.00	Vic	Sydney	07-05-00	U16
50	Jenny Randall	6.48.22	NSW		1986 Aust Titles	U16
51	Simone York	6.48.6	SA	Adelaide	20-02-93	U16
52	Tanya-Maree Holloway	6.48.72	WA	Perth	21-02-97	U16
53	Ally Durr	6.49.0	ACT	Canberra	05-03-2015	U20
54	Elizabeth Stratford	6.49.0	NSW	Sydney	03-11-96	U16
55	Belinda Cole	6.49.19	ACT	Adelaide	25-03-95	U14
56	Jessica Heazlewood	6.49.52	NSW	Hobart	08-12-02	U16
57	Karen Donnelly	6.49.53	NSW	Adelaide	25-03-95	U16
58	Natalie McKean	6.49.69	NSW		1987 Aust Titles	U16



Our two fastest women: Katie Haywood and Kerry Saxby-Junna (photo www.sporting-heroes.net)

