

## THE FIRST OLYMPIC WALK

A surprising amount has been written about the racewalks at the 1908 Olympics. This is perhaps not surprising, as this was the first Olympics that had included walking events, with a 3500m track walk held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July (as 3 heats and a final) and a 10 Miles track walk held on 16-17 July (with 2 heats on the 16<sup>th</sup> and the final on 17<sup>th</sup>). These are discussed at length in the following 2 links

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athletics\\_at\\_the\\_1908\\_Summer\\_Olympics\\_%E2%80%93\\_Men%27s\\_3500\\_metres\\_walk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athletics_at_the_1908_Summer_Olympics_%E2%80%93_Men%27s_3500_metres_walk)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athletics\\_at\\_the\\_1908\\_Summer\\_Olympics\\_%E2%80%93\\_Men%27s\\_10\\_miles\\_walk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athletics_at_the_1908_Summer_Olympics_%E2%80%93_Men%27s_10_miles_walk)

Here is how that first Olympic walk, over 3500m, panned out.

Heat 1 saw an easy win to English walker **George Larner** who led from start to finish, with New Zealander Harry Kerr (representing Australasia) next to finish, thirty seconds in arrears.

1.	George Larner	Great Britain	15:32.0
2.	Harry Kerr	Australasia	16:02.2
3.	William Palmer	Great Britain	16:33.0
4.	Paul Gunia	Germany	16:38.0
5.	Sydney Sarel	Great Britain	17:06.0
6.	Arne Højme	Denmark	17:23.4
7.	o Goetzee	Netherlands	17:37.8
	Bill Brown	Great Britain	DQ
	Alfred Yeoumans	Great Britain	DQ
	Piet Soudyn	Netherlands	DQ

Heat 2 saw Larner's English teammate **Ernie Webb** also winning easily, by nearly 2 minutes.

1.	Ernest Webb	Great Britain	15:17.2
2.	Charles Vestergaard	Denmark	17:07.0
3.	Einar Rothman	Sweden	17:40.2
4.	Willem Winkelman	Netherlands	17:57.6
5.	István Drubina	Hungary	18:44.6
6.	Piet Ruimers	Netherlands	18:44.6
	Richard Quinn	Great Britain	DQ
	John J. Reid	Great Britain	DQ

As in the other two heats, the winner led from the start but, unlike the other heats, Canadian George Goulding was hard pressed by English walker Ralph Harrison. Goulding finished strongly to fend off Harrison, winning by 10 seconds.

1.	George Goulding	Canada	15:54.0
2.	Ralph Harrison	Great Britain	16:04.4
3.	Arthur Rowland	Australasia	16:08.6
4.	Ernest Larner	Great Britain	16:10.0
5.	John Butler	Great Britain	16:17.0
6.	Richard Wilhelm	Germany	17:33.8
7.	Jan Huijgen	Netherlands	17:37.8

In the final, Webb, Goulding, and Harrison were the early leaders but they were soon caught by Larner. Soon after this, Harrison was disqualified and, by the end of the first mile, the top four spots had sorted themselves into the final positions. Larner had passed the field, bumping Webb to second place, while Kerr had managed to overtake Goulding for bronze.

1.	George Larner	Great Britain	14:55.0
2.	Ernest Webb	Great Britain	15:07.4
3.	Harry Kerr	Australasia	15:43.4
4.	George Goulding	Canada	15:49.8
5.	Arthur Rowland	Australasia	16:07.0
6.	Charles Vestergaard	Denmark	17:21.8
7.	Einar Rothman	Sweden	17:50.0
	William Palmer	Great Britain	DNF
	Ralph Harrison	Great Britain	DQ

Larner and Webb came back two days later, winning further gold and silver in the 10 Mile walk.



*The start of the Olympic 3500m walk: Goulding second from left, Webb centre, Kerr; Larner and Rowland on the right.*



*Larner leads Webb in the 3500m Olympic walk*



*Webb and Larner shake hands after their battle*

I have written or captured significant articles on the first 5 finishers in this 3500m final

Gold and Silver medallists **George Larner** and **Ernie Webb** <http://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wo-george-larner.pdf>

Bronze medallist **Harry Kerr** (NZ) <http://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wo-harry-kerr.pdf>

Fourth placed **George Goulding** (Canada) <http://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wo-george-goulding.pdf>

Fifth placed **Albert Rowland** (NZ) <http://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wo-albert-rowland.pdf>

These were but 5 of the 25 walkers who contested the 3 heats (2 from Australasia, 1 from Canada, 2 from Denmark, 2 from Germany, 11 from Great Britain, 1 from Hungary, 5 from Netherlands and 1 from Sweden.)

I was excited to receive in November 2018 an article on English walker **Sydney Sarel**, who finished fifth in heat 1, thus failing to progress to the final. I am indebted to NUTS statistician Bob Phillips for the article which tells us of a life well lived. Alas, I have not been able to find a photo so you will have to paint your own picture of this multi faceted man.

So for completeness, see <http://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wo-sydney-sarel.pdf>.

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