

## 20 KM AUSTRALIAN MEN RECORDS AND RANKINGS

With the fine 20 km times of Tom Barnes and Ian Rayson last weekend, it is time to re-publish the all-time 20 km rankings for all those male Australian walkers who have broken 1:30:00. But on this occasion, I thought it time to go a step further and ponder the progression of the 20 km distance in Australia. Here goes...

Although the 20 km walk for men was added to the 1956 Olympic Games (before then the 10,000m track walk and the 50 km roadwalks had been the main two events on offer internationally), Australia was well behind the world trend – in fact the first Victorian 20 km title was not contested until 1959 and the first Australian 20 km championship was not held until 1963.

The 1956 Amateur Athletic Union of Australia (AAU) Almanac was the first Australian publication to formally acknowledge the 20 km distance and quoted the following statistic amongst the 'Best on Record for Non-Record Events'

20 km **road** walk **1:33:25**    E.J. Allsopp (VIC)    03/07/1954    Melbourne, VIC

For the first time that year, the Almanac showed a 20 km ranking list with Ted Allsopp leading from the front. From then onwards, the 20 km event was a 'legitimate' event from a ranking and record point of view.

The first 20 km track record of the modern era was set by Don Keane in the leadup to the 1956 Olympic Games. Don had represented Australia in the 10,000m walk at the 1952 Olympics and was Australia's premier speed walker. On September 22, 1956, a special 2 Hour Track World Record attempt was set up for Ted Allsopp at Olympic Park in Melbourne. When Don heard about it, he realised it was also an opportunity for him and he approached Alf Robinson to see if he could attack the records for the 1 hour, 15 km and 10 mile distances. With all in place, he burst from the blocks with a 1:40 first lap and lead the whole way in what could only be described as dreadful conditions. He passed the 5 mile mark in 35:03.4 for a new Australian and Victorian record. Maintaining his pace, he set new British Empire, Australian and Victorian records for 10 km (43:38.2), 7 miles (49:14.2), 1 hour (8 miles 847 yards), 15 km (1:06:09.4) and 10 miles (1:11:07.8). At the 10 mile mark, in what was a major miscalculation, he stopped to change his singlet. Getting going again after some 50 seconds, he raced on towards the 20 km mark, reaching it in 1:30:22.2 for a yet another set of records. His 20 km time was only 10.2 secs outside the current world record but he had dropped 50 secs at the 10 mile mark! He had missed a certain world record.

20 km **track** walk **1:30:22.2**    D. M. Keane (VIC)    22/09/1956    Olympic Park, Melbourne, VIC

Although Don's track record would remain for many years, Noel Freeman of Victoria was soon to start making serious inroads to the road best-on-record. In 1960, in the leadup to the Rome Olympic Games, he recorded times of 1:30:42, 1:31:05 and 1:32:42, all better than Ted Allsopp's 1954 standard. The Almanac showed the new best-on-record as

20 km **road** walk **1:30:42**    N.F. Freeman (VIC)    09/04/1960    Albert Park, Melbourne, VIC

As the sixties progressed, no one else came near the 90 minute standard and it was not until 1968, when attempting to qualify for this third Olympic Games, that Noel Freeman finally broke his 1960 time with 1:29:12. This was one of the top times in the world that year and should have guaranteed him a Games spot. That he was left out of the team in controversial circumstances remains one of the darkest periods of Australian Athletic history.

20 km **road** walk **1:29:12**    N.F. Freeman (VIC)    06/04/1968    Albert Park, Melbourne, VIC

Walkers like Frank Clark, Bob Gardiner, Peter Fullager and Ross Haywood came and went but no one could approach Noel's time until 1977 when a 34 year old Ballarat walker, Willi Sawall, equalled it

20 km **road** walk **1:29:12**    W. Sawall (VIC)    03/07/1976    Albert Park, Melbourne, VIC

This was the start of a new exciting era of Australian walking, with Sawall leading from the front. The next year, he lowered his 20 km time to 1:28:44 and broke the Australian track records for 1500m (5:39.3), 3000m (12:05.4), 10,000m (43:35.8) and 50,000m (4:06:39).

20 km **road** walk **1:28:44**    W. Sawall (VIC)    06/02/1977    Point Cook, Melbourne, VIC

Sawall held sway for the next few years until David Smith, a brash young Victorian, burst on the scene in 1980, triggering a battle of giants as he and Sawall beat the 1:28:44 standard on 6 occasions in the space of 8 months. First Sawall lowered the best-on-record time to 1:28:14 and then to 1:25:25 and then Smith lowered it to 1:23:16.

20 km **road** walk **1:28:14.0**    W. Sawall (VIC)    01/07/1979    Melbourne, VIC  
                                   **1:25:25.7**    W. Sawall (VIC)    01/09/1979  
                                   **1:23:36.0**    D. Smith (VIC)    29/09/1979    Eschborn, Germany

<b>1:23:16.0</b>	D. Smith (VIC)	16/12/1979	Melbourne, VIC
1:24:04.3	W. Sawall (VIC)	23/03/1980	Sydney, NSW
1:27:10.9	D. Smith (VIC)	23/03/1980	Sydney, NSW

Willi was never one to shirk a challenge and, in May 1980, he contested a 2 Hour track walk in Melbourne. At 38 years of age, he broke Don Keane's 1956 track record with a time of 1:28:34.4 – the record had stood for 24 years – Willi also went on to set a new Australian 2 Hour record with 27.123 km.

20 km <b>track</b> walk	<b>1:28:34.4</b>	W. Sawall (VIC)	24/05/1980	Melbourne, VIC
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Many thought that this would be Willi's last record foray as during the next year David Smith rewrote the record books, both on track and road, with a series of times that were breathtaking in their audacity and sheer speed. Just as Willi had dominated all distances in the last seventies, now it was David's turn, setting new Australian records for 1500m (5:19.1), 3000m (11:11.5), 5000m (20:13.9), 10,000m (40:47.7), 15,000m (1:03:32.0) and 20,000m (1:26:07.8) as well as setting new a road standard of 1:21:39.0 for the 20 km distance. His best 3 20 km efforts for that year read like this

20 km <b>road</b> walk	<b>1:21:39.0</b>	D. Smith (VIC)	17/05/1981	Melbourne, VIC
20 km <b>track</b> walk	<b>1:26:07.8</b>	D. Smith (VIC)	27/06/1981	Melbourne, VIC
20 km road walk	1:23:21.0	D. Smith (VIC)	12/07/1981	Adelaide, SA



**Don Keane, Noel Freeman, Willi Sawall and David Smith**

But Willi was not yet finished. Although now approaching 40 years of age, 1982 was arguably his best ever year as he burst back to the front with a series of mind blowing times over all distances. In December 1981, he won the VAWC Christmas 20 km in 1:26:55. This was then followed by a win in the Victorian 10 km walk in 41:17, another PB. He took extended long service leave and committed himself fully to walking. As the winter season started, he moved up a notch, winning the Victorian 15 km (1:04:55), a VAWC 10 km handicap (40:53), the Victorian 30 km (2:08:00.4), a VAWC 10 km (40:04), the Canberra 20 miles (2:18:18), the Victorian 20 km (1:21:36), the Australian 20 km in Brisbane (1:29:02), a VAWC 10 km (40:44), the Commonwealth Games 30 km trial (2:08:28) and the AFRWC 10 km in Richmond, NSW (40:04). Yes, that's right – at 40 years of age, he recorded a time of 1:21:36 to set a new Australian all-time best.

20 km <b>road</b> walk	<b>1:21:36.0</b>	W. Sawall (VIC)	04/07/1982	Melbourne, VIC
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The see-saw continued as, in 1983, David Smith took the standard back with times of 1:20:51 (August) and 1:20:22.7 (December)

20 km <b>road</b> walk	<b>1:20:51.0</b>	D. Smith (VIC)	21/08/1983	Petange, Luxembourg
20 km <b>road</b> walk	<b>1:20:22.7</b>	D. Smith (VIC)	18/12/1983	Melbourne, VIC

David then built on this base with further fantastic times and new Commonwealth Records in 1984 and 1985. These included 19:07.3 (5000m – Feb 1985), 38:47.13 (10,000m - December 1984), 1:19:52.0 (20 km road – March 1985) and 38:20.9 (10,000m – September 1985). Finally an Australian had broken the 80 minute barrier. David's speed over the 5000m and 10,000m distances was the key – unless you had awesome firepower, you couldn't hope to break 80 minutes. And two things that David Smith had in plenty were strength and speed.

20 km <b>road</b> walk	<b>1:19:52.0</b>	D. Smith (VIC)	16/03/1985	Shanghai, China
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For the next few years, David lead the annual rankings, holding off challenges from a new generation of walkers – Simon Baker, Andrew Jachno and Michael Harvey. He broke 80 minutes again in 1987, beating his own best-on-record with 1:19:22. Simon Baker was second on the ranking list that year with 1:21:57 – an excellent time but still over 2 minutes in arrears.

20 km **road** walk **1:19:22.0** D. Smith (VIC) 19/07/1987 Hobart, TAS

After 10 years at the top, David finally retired from top level walking, dropped his AIS scholarship and moved to Queensland. The stage was now set to see if anyone could match his times. The 1989 rankings showed Simon Baker (1:21:19) and Andrew Jachno (1:22:29) leading the charge but they both lacked David's sheer speed so his times looked safe for the time being.

How quickly we had to re-appraise our view. Andrew Jachno broke David's 3000m track record with an awesome 10:56.22 in February 1991 while Nick A'hern finished just outside his 5000m and 10,000 records with 19:08.03 and 39:10.10. The ranking lists for that year showed Nick leading with 1:19:33.0 (Melbourne, 15/12/1990) and Andrew not far behind with 1:20:43.0 (Brisbane, 26/08/1990). Nick had become the second Australian to break the magic 80 minute barrier and was within 11 seconds of David's time.

Nick again broke 80 minutes in July 1993 (1:19:48.0 – Hawkesbury, NSW). It was just a matter of time before one of these talented walkers had the chance to contest a 20,000m track walk and it was Nick A'Hern who made the most of the opportunity, stopping the clocks at 1:20:12.3 on the track at Fana in Norway to set a new Commonwealth and Australian record.

20 km **track** walk **1:20:12.3** N. A'Hern (NSW)08/05/1993 Fana, Norway

Throughout the nineties, Nick lead from the front, recording times in the low eighties year after year and finally breaking David's 5000m Commonwealth Record in February 1998 by 1 second – with a time of 18:51.39. David's one last remaining record was his 10,000m track record – but what a time it was: 38:20.9 – and it still stands today.

In 1999, 21 year old Nathan Deakes burst onto the world scene with a 20 km road time of 1:20:15 (26/01/1999 – Adelaide) and from there, it was a case of sit back and watch. In the 2000 Olympics, he finished 8<sup>th</sup> in the 20 km event in 1:21:03 and then in the 50 km (held in very hot conditions) he finished 6<sup>th</sup> in 3:47:29. The next year, he won the Canberra Grand Prix 10,000m walk in February with 38:53 before defending his Australian 20 km title a month later with a fast 1:21:02. Finally we had someone to challenge the 20 km records.

He had the tough job of walking the double at the IAAF World Championships in Edmonton in August 2001 so he headed off overseas to prepare. His first big race was in Naumburg in Germany on 8 April 2001 when he won in a sizzling 3:43:43, only 30 seconds outside Simon Baker's National Record. Then on June 9 in Krakow in Poland, he came 4<sup>th</sup> in an International 10 km race in 38:09.7 (only 8 seconds behind the winner) for a new Australian best time. Then a week later in Dublin, he won the Dublin Grand Prix of Walking 20 km race in an astonishing 1:18:14, the best ever by an Australian by over a minute. This time skyrocketed him into the all time international top 10 for the 20 km walk – now we had a third Australian under the 80 minute barrier.

20 km **road** walk **1:18:14.0** N. Deakes (VIC) 16/06/2001 Dublin, Ireland

He finished off 2001 in the best possible way, winning the Goodwill Games 20,000m track walk in Brisbane in September with a wonderful time of 1:19:48.1. Now an Australian had broken the 80 minute barrier on the track.

20 km **track** walk **1:19:48.1** N. Deakes (VIC)04/09/2001 Brisbane, QLD

While Nathan was riding the waves as our top walker, another young star was slowly working his way up through the ranks – NSW walker Luke Adams had been in Nathan's shadow since their Junior days but he was now flowering into a top 20 km walker. A time of 1:21:24 in Naumburg in Germany in May 2003 was an indicator of things to come. His subsequent fifth place in the 2003 IAAF World Championship 20 km in Paris was done with a time of 1:19:33 – Luke now had the honour of being the fourth Australian to break the 80 minute barrier.

In April 2005, Nathan took another step forward with his win in the IAAF Grand Prix 20 km roadwalk in Cixi in China – his time of 1:17:33 was only 12 seconds outside the road world record. Interestingly, Luke Adams, who finished 13<sup>th</sup> in the same race, improved his own PB to 1:19:19. Nathan broke 80 minutes four times in a 2 month period from February to April 2005.

20 km **road** walk **1:17:33.0** N. Deakes (VIC) 23/04/2005 Cixi, China

With Nathan regularly beating the 80 minute barrier and with Luke close behind, another world class 20 km walker now

popped up in the shape of Victorian Jared Tallent. Much younger than the other two, he had the same required attribute – huge amounts of speed. So far he has broken the 80 minute barrier on a number of occasions and has a best time of 1:19:41. Time will tell if he is to be our next 20 km record holder or whether that mantle will be passed to someone else, perhaps as yet unheralded.



**Nick A'Hern, Nathan Deakes, Luke Adams and Jared Tallent**

Now onto the all time ranking list. Quite a few of the names have been discussed above. All are good walkers, some great. In total, 41 Australians have broken 90 minutes for the 20 km distance. The performances of Tom Barnes and Ian Rayson last weekend push them up the ranking list to 21<sup>st</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> respectively.

1.	1:17.33.0	Nathan Deakes	V	170877	1	Cixi City, China	23-Apr-05
2.	1:19.15.0	Luke Adams	N	221076	7	Cheboksary, Russia	10-May-08
3.	1:19.22.0	Dave Smith	V	240755	1	Hobart	19-Jul-87
4.	1:19.33.0	Nick A'Hern	N	60169	1	Melbourne	15-Dec-90
5.	1:19.41.0	Jared Tallent	V	171084	1	Melbourne	23-Feb-08
6.	1:20.43.0	Andrew Jachno	V	130462	1	Brisbane	26-Aug-90
7.	1:20.49.0	Dion Russell	V	80875	1	Melbourne	19-Mar-99
8.	1:21.19.0	Simon Baker	V	60258	1	Canberra	27-Aug-88
9.	1:21.36.0	Willi Sawall	V	71141	1	Melbourne	4-Jul-82
10.	1:21.49.0	Adam Rutter	N	241286	3	Melbourne	23-Feb-08
11.	1:22.55.0	Chris Erickson	V	11281	31	Cheboksary, Russia	10-May-08
12.	1:24.11.0	Liam Murphy	S	50679	1	Adelaide	26-Jul-03
13.	1:24.20.0	Duane Cousins	V	130773	5	Melbourne	19-Mar-99
14.	1:24.34.0	Brent Vallance	N	300472	15	Naumburg, Germany	23-May-98
15.	1:24.54.0	Paul Copeland	V	250467	1	Melbourne	10-Nov-91
16.	1:24.56.0	Darren Bown	S	300674	4	Sydney	6-Mar-05
17.	1:25.02.0	Troy Sundstrom	N	300581	7	Melbourne	19-Mar-99
18.	1:25.31.0	Steve Becroft	V	140371	2	Canberra	28-Jan-94
19.	1:25.34.0	Mike Harvey	V	51262	3	Melbourne	25-Aug-90
20.	1:26.33.0	Mark Donahoo	V	270558	1	Melbourne	22-May-94
21.	1:26.40.0	Tom Barnes	V	220982	1	Melbourne	24-Aug-08
22.	1:27.12.0	Tim Erickson	V	231150	1	Melbourne	14-Dec-80
23.	1:27.19.0	Dominic McGrath	V	40672	10	Melbourne	19-Mar-99
24.	1:27.20.0	Daniel (Thorne) Walters	V	191279	1	Melbourne	16-Dec-01
25.	1:27.29.0	Bill Dyer	V	260361	-	Melbourne	22-Jun-85
26.	1:27.35.0	Michael McCagh	W	160486	6	Canberra	28-Jan-07
27.	1:27.42.0	Brad Malcolm	V	70878	1	Melbourne	19-Jul-98
28.	1:28.18.0	Mike Woods	N	111062	30	Bergen, Norway	24-Sep-83
29.	1:28.25.0	Rob McFadden	S	150366	5	Canberra	27-Aug-88
30.	1:28.29.0	Steve Hausfeld	N	70452	6	Richmond	9-Apr-88
31.	1:28.29.0	Shane Pearson	Q	50674	8	Melbourne	27-Feb-97
32.	1:29.04.0	Craig Jeffery	V	120568	3	Melbourne	4-Aug-91
33.	1:29.08.0	Marcus Dwyer	V	260377	3	Melbourne	19-Jul-98
34.	1:29.12.0	Noel Freeman	V	251238	1	Melbourne	6-Apr-68
35.	1:29.13.0	Ian Waters	V	10467	-	Melbourne	19-Dec-93
36.	1:29.22.0	Rohan Best	T	240273	1	Hobart	4-Aug-90
37.	1:29.23.0	Craig Brill	V	101167	2	Melbourne	4-Aug-91

38.	1:29.27.0	Ian Rayson	N	40288	2	Melbourne	24-Aug-08
39.	1:29.40.0	Travis Harbour	V	121275	10	Melbourne	27-Feb-97
40.	1:29.48.0	Martin Richardson	V	'63	3	Melbourne	5-Feb-84
41.	1:29.51.0	Mark Blackwood	V	251177	2	Melbourne	1-Sep-96