

TIM'S TRIVIA – SHOOTING YOUR AGE



In golf, an "age shooter" is a golfer whose score matches or beats his age on a certified full length golf course - for example, a golfer aged 70 who shoots a 70 or better.



First some interesting statistics compliments of website <http://golf.about.com/od/faqs/f/ageshooters.htm>:

- The overall record for youngest golfer to shoot his age belongs to Bob Hamilton, a golf pro who shot his age of 59 at Hamilton Golf Club in Evansville, Ind., in 1975.
- The golfer who holds the age-shooting record on golf's major professional tours is Walter Morgan, playing the Champions Tour. In 2002, at age 61, Morgan shot a 60 in the AT&T Canada Senior Open Championship.
- On the PGA Tour, the record belongs to Sam Snead. Slammin' Sam fired a 67 at the Quad Cities Open in 1979, when he was 67 years old. Then he set a new record a day later, shooting 66.
- The oldest golfer to shoot his age was 103-year-old Arthur Thompson of Victoria, British Columbia. Thompson was playing the Uplands Golf Club in Victoria when he accomplished the feat in 1972.
- How about the record for beating your age by the most strokes? OK, that's Ed Ervasti, who in 2007, at age 93, posted a 72 at Sunningdale Golf & Country Club (Old Course) in London, Ontario.
- On the pro tours, the most-strokes-below-age record is held by Jerry Barber. In 1994, when he was 78 years old, Barber fired a 69 in the Kroger Senior Classic, nine strokes below his age.
- And finally, the record for most times shooting your age belongs to T. Edison Smith of Moorhead, Minn. Frank Bailey of Abilene, Texas, had long held this record, matching or beating his age 2,623 times, from age 71 until age 98. But in 2006, Smith passed Bailey and continues on with the record.

Now that's of general interest but what is the Australian connection and what's it got to do with racewalking.

Probably the most well known Australian sportman to shoot his age was **Don Bradman**. Apart from cricket, Bradman excelled in many sports including tennis, squash, golf and billiards. He played golf from a young age until he was well into his eighties when **he regularly 'broke his age' as a member of the Kooyonga Golf Club in Adelaide**.

And we have a couple of famous Australian racewalkers who also shot their age.

Bill Murray, born in 1882, was an incredible sporting personality by any measure. Joining the Melbourne Harriers as a young man, he quickly developed into a top class runner. His best performance was held to be in the 1910 seven mile open race at Brighton where he secured first and fastest time prizes with 36:21. There was a big field of 108 competitors, including E. Voight, fresh from Olympic and world championship triumphs. In that same year, he also won the Victorian 10 mile track race and is credited as winning the first marathon run in Melbourne. This event ran from Frankston to Melbourne and he won in 2:58:48. This remained the best marathon time by a Victorian until beaten by Percy Cerrutty 36 years later (when he won the 1946 Victorian marathon in 2:58:11).

His debut as a walker came when he was asked to take part in a race to fill a poor field. To his amazement and the delight of his club, he won. Two weeks later he walked in two races in Melbourne and beat Australian record holder A. O. Barrett. His walking really came to the attention of people in 1911 with his wins in the Victorian 1 mile (6:40.8) and 3 mile (22:38.6) walk events. His 1 mile time was a new Victorian and Australasian record, beating A. O. Barrett's 1896 time of 6:42.0. The next year, he was even faster, winning the titles once again with records that the general sporting population could hardly credit – his 1 mile time was 6:22.8 and his 3 mile time was 20:56.0. These 2 performances were so ahead of their time that they withstood all challenges over the next 36 years. When the last Victorian 1 mile and 3 mile walk championships were held in 1948, they still stood as championship records. George Knott walked 21:29.0 to win the 3 mile in 1940 and walked 6:23.2 to win the 1 mile in 1948 –close to but not as good as Bill's 1912 performances.

On the basis of his outstanding walks, he was selected to compete for Australasia in the 1912 Olympics. History shows that he was disqualified but there is more to the story as he elaborated in later years

The Australian team struggled from the time it landed in Europe. We had to fend for ourselves and were not properly fit. We were not there long enough to become fit. There were no Olympic Villages. You had to find your own accommodation and eat in cafes.

The outbreak of World War I put an end to further sporting aspirations for Bill and all the other walkers and it was not until 1920 that Victorian Championships were once again resumed. He was one of the foundation members of the Victorian Amateur Walkers Club in 1922 and remained a member for many years.

He was still racewalking in 1931 when our oldest living life member Frank McGuire started but he retired soon after to play golf, which he did with great success into his nineties. **In fact, in 1964 on the Victoria golf course, when 82 years of age, he went around the 18 holes in less than his age.**



On 4 September 1971, in the Sporting Globe Magazine, an article was published on Bill Murray and the above photo was taken. At that stage Bill was 90 years old and was Australia's oldest practising solicitor. From Monday thru Thursday he still walked from his home in West Brunswick to his office in Collins St and put in a day's work and then he played golf on Friday thru Sunday. He still drove his own car and was Australia's only remaining pre-World war One Olympian.

Bill was truly a remarkable personality on every level and we are unlikely to see his equal again.

NSW athlete **Ernie (Ernest E.) Austen** was born in 1891, one of 14 children. He took up the sport of racewalking around 1910, initially as a track walker, and his first few years in the sport were unremarkable. With the Great War interrupting the careers of all young athletes, it was not until the re-establishment of organized sport in 1919 that he finally rose to prominence with a series of fine record breaking performances. Lightly built and with what was regarded as a perfect style, his mixture of speed, style and stamina marked him out in any field.



But as often happens, when a walker of note rises to the fore, another follows soon after. Thus it was with Austen for, as he rose to the top, a young giant called George Parker, some 10 years his junior, followed close behind and soon overtook him, picking up the 1920 Olympic spot and earning silver in the Olympic 3000m walk.

Austen had to wait a number of years for his opportunity at fame. It was not until 1924 that the veteran walker's efforts were rewarded with Olympic selection and Austen, now in his thirties, proudly made the trip to Paris for the 10,000m track walk.

Amazingly and controversially, he was warned in the first lap by the French judge who thought his gait doubtful. In the second lap the American judge ordered him off when he was lying third and was doing well. In later years, he commented

"I was in third place, just behind the leaders and going along very easily. I thought I had a good chance but then an American judge came up and told me I was disqualified. I asked him why but he said he didn't know. You usually get two cautions before being disqualified but I wasn't aware of them. Nobody ever did tell me why I was outed."

He broke down and went to the dressing rooms. It was his first disqualification in some 15 years of competitive walking. The pace at the time of his disqualification was very slow – equal to about 7:30 to the mile. In fact, of the 13 starters, only 6 finished in what was a farcical event. Australian officials were adamant that his style was satisfactory and the whole event deteriorated into an ugly affair. (Walking was consequently dropped from the 1928 Olympics and did not re-appear in the Olympics until 1932, when a 50 km roadwalk was introduced.)

He finally retired in 1932, after more than 20 years of competitive walking. Still an active sportsman, he took up golf with immediate success. Despite representing Australia at Olympic level and holding various Australasian walk titles and record times, **he regarded his proudest achievement as in the field of golf when, at 81 years of age, he played a round in less than his age, 80 off the stick.**

He died in 1985 in his mid nineties. Like so many of the walkers from his era, he lived to a ripe old age and had a full and varied life.

Ernie Austen's place in Australian racewalking history is assured. As one of our first Olympic walkers, he paved the way for future generations to try their mettle against the top echelon of international walkers. He, along with Bill Murray, showed that Australian walkers were able to mix it with the best in the world. Since then, Australia has gone on to have a proud history of Olympic racewalking participation.

And we have also produced quite a few good golfers!

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