

MARK DONAHOO

This article was written by VRWC member Heather Carr and was published initially in the Victorian Masters Assn newsletter Footprints. Thank you Heather for allowing me to add it to our VRWC archives...Tim Erickson...August 2014

Mark Donahoo has been involved in Open and Masters Athletics since the tender age of 16. Mark has a total of 38 years of athletics and racewalking under his belt. This demonstrates a fantastic commitment to a sport he is totally and completely enthusiastic and exuberant about.

Mark resides in Aberfeldie with his delightful and supportive wife, Kate, their 2 cats and 2 fish!! Mark is a secondary school teacher. His role is that of a 'daily organiser', making sure the school runs smoothly. He also teaches Physical education, English and Religious education.

Mark's passion for athletics began when he was in Year 11. Mark was selected for a racewalking event for St. Joseph's Secondary College, North Melbourne athletic team. This selection and following success in racewalking, encouraged him to join an athletic club. He joined North Old Boys Athletic Club before becoming part of the A grade combined team.

As Mark became more proficient in his racewalking, he looked further afield for additional competition. To meet this need, Mark joined the Victorian Race Walkers Club in 1977 where racewalking is the primary speciality, and eventually with many, many races under his belt he was ultimately selected for the Australian World Cup 50km Team in 1987 at the ripe old age of 28. Curiously Mark particularly enjoys the 50km event, an endurance event not equalled in any other realm of athletics. 50km walks test the strongest and most capable athletes.

In World Masters there are rankings for all distances from 1500 metres walks through to 50km. Mark has competed in all distances. Can you imagine the amount of kilometres he has in his legs? Thousands upon thousands!!

Mark has an impressive and amazing resume relating to racewalking. His achievements include competing in the 1987, 1989, 1993 and 1995 World Race Walking Cup events. To gain selection, to be awarded a place representing Australia in the World Cup is the pinnacle for adept and competent racewalkers. Not only are they competing individually but also representing their country, wearing the green and gold! Team points are awarded, with men competing in the Lugano Cup and women competing in the Eschborn Cup. Of course, the Olympic Games and Commonwealth Games are the absolute zenith for open athletes; Mark was almost selected for the 1994 Commonwealth Games, but marginally missed selection which was a particularly sad time for him. However, not to be daunted by this narrow miss, he continued to display the commitment and perseverance necessary in his quest for reaching his potential or his highest ability, thus adding to this distinctive record of which he should be immensely proud.

Mark's training for the open ranks saw him walking for up to 140km's per week. A consequence of this strenuous training that was necessary for selection resulted in Mark acquiring Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Mark competed in a series of races looking for a qualifying time, but because his body could not absorb the necessary vitamins and minerals placed his body under such enormous stress that he fell foul to Chronic Fatigue. This syndrome continues to plague Mark, and therefore he needs to thoroughly plan his training for future races. So far his management of the syndrome has proven to be impressive, as he continues to compete and perform remarkably well. Another issue Mark has had to contend with is tight psoas muscles which in turn lead to lower back problems. Again, he appears to have overcome this problem by understanding the nature of the injury and dealing with it effectively.

Mark's PB's are remarkable

1500m 5:48 mins

3000m 12:01 mins

5000m 20:38 mins
10km 42:20 mins
20km 86:32 mins
50km 4:11.10 hrs

Mark has also been very competitive in Australian Open Championships from 1981 through to 2007.

Mark joined Masters as a Pre Vet in 1995 at the age of 37, then became a Master in 1998 when he turned 40. It was at this time he decided to retire from the Open International scene, and concentrate on competing in Master's events.

Mark won the World Masters 20km in San Sebastian Spain in 2005 as well as the 3000m indoor event in Jyvaskyla Finland in 2012. Mark has been a member of the Australian Masters teams in 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2012. Mark now trains up to 50km a week, swims occasionally and maintains a weekly pilates session.

Coaching has become an integral part of athletics for Mark and he has a satisfaction and appreciation for passing on accumulated knowledge and experience to fellow athletes. Mark first became qualified in 1990, and became a level 5 coach in the late 1990's. Mark has the distinction of coaching 2 athletes to World Race Walking Cup Teams. Simone Wolowiec and Dominic McGrath, both worthy and creditable representatives for Australia.

A major highlight for Mark's coaching is the success he realized in coaching Lyn Ventris to many World Masters Records, and particularly being Lyn's coach when she was bestowed with the title World Masters Female Athlete of the Year in 2011 and 2012. This is an outstanding accomplishment, demonstrating Mark's ability to transmit his knowledge to an athlete, particularly considering Lyn resides in Western Australia and Mark in Victoria!

Mark enjoys activities such as 'solving 'killer' sudoku puzzles'. He is also the handicapper for the Victorian Race Walkers Club and was VRWC head coach for 20 years. Mark is also an accomplished author. His book, 'History of the Victorian Race Walking Club Incorporated' (published 2005) is a comprehensive coverage of the history of the VRWC, encapsulating facets of the club from 1922 to current days.

Mark currently competes for Essendon in the summer and winter competition of Athletics Victoria. This is a strong and successful club and has many fine racewalkers amongst its ranks. In Masters, Mark competes in M50-54 age group.

Mark aims to compete in 2014 in Budapest in the Indoor Games, as well as Leon, France and Perth, Western Australia in following years. His desire to compete at a prominent level continues as fervently as it did when he was a junior. We wish him prolonged good health and continuing success in his chosen sport of racewalking.