

## IAN RAYSON – A YOUNG WALKER IN A HURRY



### Ian in action in various races in 2008-2009

Ian Rayson's selection to represent Australia in the 2009 World University Games is his second international vest and follows on from his selection in the 2006 World Racewalking Cup. Hence it is well and truly time that readers had a chance to meet this talented young walker.

Ian, born 4 February 1988, has just recently turned 21 and is a member of the NSW based Mingara Athletics Club and a current Central Coast Academy of Sport athletics scholarship athlete.

Unlike many of our other top walkers who have honed their skills since Little Athletics, Ian is a late starter to our sport and was 14 when he first tried his hand at race walking.

*"I first started walking at my School Athletics Carnival in 2002. Gosford High is one of the few schools to even have a walk, so if it weren't for them, I'd still be swimming! I had a go at the 800m walk event and to my surprise won it. I progressed through the school levels to come 4<sup>th</sup> in the 1500m walk at NSW CHS in 7:16 without any training. At this stage my mum rang around to try and find a coach. We found Roz Nelson at Mingara Little As and she coached me voluntarily for four years. I came 4<sup>th</sup> at the National All Schools that year in 7:01 and at the end of the season I won the State Little As U/15 1500m walk in 6:33.5."*

Ian's next successes were at the 2004 when he took third place in the Australian Track and Field U18 3000m championship in **14:21.21**, won the Australian U18 8 km road championship in **39:38** and won the Australian All Schools U17 3000m walk with **13:14.07**.

In 2005 he kept improving his 3000m and 5000m times and won Bronze at the Australian Youth Olympic Festival with limited preparation. He also moved up to the 10 km distance to try and get a berth in the World Youth team. He did not make the tough 45:10 mark but was delighted to do **46:35** in his second attempt at the distance. In July he walked his first 20 km race in a time of **1:38:30** but paid a penalty for an effort for which he was not yet really ready.

He finished off the year in grand style with a win in the Pacific Schools Games U20 3000m walk (**12:36.52**), followed a week later with a double at the Australian All Schools Championships, taking golds in the U20 5000m (**22:11.14**) and the U18 3000m (**12:34.90**). His sights were now firmly set on qualifying for the 2006 World Racewalking Cup and World Junior Championships.

2006 started with his first ever NSW Open medal – a silver in the 5000m in a PB time of **21:18**. He also cemented a spot in the Under 20 Men's World Racewalking Cup team with **45:10**. Although this time was short of the 45:00 needed for individual selection, it was well under the team standard of 47:00 and Ian was named alongside Daniel Coleman and Brook Keys as part of a strong overall team of 19 walkers.

Shortly after his selection, he suffered an ankle injury which severely limited his preparation for the World Cup. Although he managed **44:44** at the Australian U20 10,000m track championship in April to take gold ahead of Brook and Daniel, he was not walking comfortably and was disqualified in the last kilometre at the World Cup 10 km a month later.



**Ian in the 2006 Australian World Racewalking Cup team – centre, back row, between Luke Adams and Troy Sundstrom**

What racewalking followers probably did not realise what that Ian was also a top swimmer at that time and, that same year, he won a silver medal at the Australian Age Swimming Championships in the 17-18 yr 10km Open Water swim. *“I had consistently placed in the top 10 at nationals in Open Water swimming but this medal was a highlight of my career, along with breaking the minute for 100m Backstroke.”*

At this stage, since he had not qualified for World Junior Championships, he decided to up his distances to contest the 20 km. Although he won the Australian U20 20 km road championship in Hobart in August (**1:39:36**), he was not happy with his year. *“In retrospect I would have spent longer honing my 10k speed. I didn’t have a good 20k that year – a terrible hilly course at Greystanes and then Hobart. Lack of other competitors may also have played a part. Much of 2006 was spent trying to combat my injury, and it was in November that I finally solved the problem – poor calf strength. On a more positive note I finished year 12 – no that is not an excuse for a bad walking year because I trained all year – and was surprised to get a 99 UAI (TER in Victorian language). I also placed in the top 10 at the National Open 10k Open Water Swim.”*

By 2007 Anne Saville had offered to coach him and the focus was now on improving his 20 km time. The highlight without a doubt was winning his first NSW Open 20km title in **1:31:49** - a 7min PB. He defended his Australian U20 20 km title in Perth but was disappointed with his time of **1:34:35**. Like the previous year, lack of competitors in this event meant that it was a solo walk (this was the last scheduling of this championship which has now been decommissioned).

At the start of 2008 Ian was forced to make a hard decision. He now realised that he needed to train full-time as a walker if he wanted to keep improving. From 2004 until then, he had swum 5-6 mornings per week (4:30am start). *“People ask why I persisted with swimming for so long and I guess the answer is that I was still improving rapidly in my swimming until 2007, and I wanted to compete in the Olympic Trials. This I did in the 10k Open Water Swim, placing 21<sup>st</sup> and was 18<sup>th</sup> in the 5k. But the big time for swimming was the pool nationals. I retired from swimming after scoring a Bronze Medal at the State Championships in the 5km Open Water swim. This was in my opinion my best ever race, and it was on this note that I retired.”*



**24 November 2007 - Ian exiting the water to win the 1km event during the 2007 Toowoomb Bay Ocean Swim - <http://www.newsphotos.com.au/ImageDetail.asp?RefNum=94618626>**

Now fully committed to walking, he competed in his first Open National Championship in March 2008, coming 7<sup>th</sup> in the 20k in a PB time of **1:31:16** (and taking silver in the accompanying Australian U23 20 km championship). With extra miles in the legs, he attempted his first Canberra 20 Mile in June, coming 6<sup>th</sup> in an excellent **2:33:12** and blasted out an even better **2:17:43** to win the NSW 30 km Championship. He finished the winter season with a fine second to Tom Barnes in the Australian 20 km championship in yet another PB – **1:29:27**. A very brief ITB friction injury put paid to any thoughts of attempting a 50 km so he continued to focus on his speed. He was rewarded with yet another 20 km PB in Melbourne in December when he recorded **1:29:16** in atrocious conditions.



**Ian (number 82) in the early stages of the 2008 Canberra 20 Mile event – a great first up 2:33:12**

2009 started with a great walk in the NSW 10,000m track championship where his time of **41:56** saw him only about 50 secs behind winner Luke Adams. Then it was onto Canberra for an AIS camp/scientific study. The chance to train with the top walkers was an eye opener and he responded well to the challenge. This was just the boost he needed and, at the Australian 20 km championship in Melbourne in March, he came 7<sup>th</sup> in a big PB time of **1:27:43** (and also won the accompanying Under 23 title). This was only 1:10 behind 3<sup>rd</sup> place but, far more importantly, beat the 1:28:00 qualifying standard for the World University Games. He has now been selected on this team alongside Adam Rutter and Tom Barnes.

Through all of this, he has managed to keep up full-time studies and will graduate this year with a BMath. *“I think it would have been far more difficult to study part-time, as this ultimately means spending at least six years at Uni. My training is fitted in around Uni and this has never been a problem. In addition I work as a First-year Statistics Class Tutor.”*

Ian's PBs are excellent for such an early stage in his walking career and, at only 21 years of age, he has big future ahead of him. His best times currently stand as follows:

1500m	5:42
3000m	11:53
5000m	20:27
10000m	41:56
20 km	1:27:43
30 km	2:17:43

With 6 NSW Open State titles and some 20 NSW State medals overall as well as a swag of National Medals of all colours, Ian has proven himself a big time performer. We wish him all the best in the 25<sup>th</sup> World Summer Universiade Games which will be held in Belgrade in Serbia in early July. We know that he will be giving a full 100% effort and you can't ask for more than that.