

KIM MOTTROM - AUSTRALIA'S NEWEST INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Kim Mottrom is our latest Australian racewalking representative, having just been named in the 50km team to contest the 2014 IAAF Racewalking World Cup in Taicang, China. For Kim, it has been a long haul and now, at 29 years of age, he has finally nailed it big time.



Kim wins the 2013 Australian 50km Championship at Fawkner Park

Born 27 September 1984 in South Australia, Kim started Little Athletics at age 10, but confided to me that he was *“terrible at everything. I was far from an athletic child and I can honestly say that my first 1500m run was barely under 10 minutes. The walk was the only event I wasn't terrible at and it became the event I could focus on.”*

He started training properly when he finished Little Athletics at the end of 1999, with Roy McFadden coaching him initially. His first interstate trip was in June 2000 when, aged 15, he contested the Australian Junior 10km roadwalk championship at the LBG Carnival in Canberra - his placing an inauspicious 10th and his time an inauspicious **1:01:53**.

At the end of that same year, the Australian All-School T&F Championships were in Adelaide so Kim fronted for the U20 5000m track walk, coming second to Jared Tallent in a much improved time of **25:33.61** (Jared's winning time was 22:16.46).

Kim parted ways with Roy McFadden at the beginning of 2001 and asked his son Rob to coach him. He continued his improvement under the new training program, coming an impressive third in the Australian Junior 10km roadwalk championship in Canberra in June, his time of **47:44** over 14 minutes faster than the year before (Jared Tallent was first in 43:53 and Aaron Mellor was second in 47:40).

Alas, Kim's racewalking path has not been an easy one. At the end of 2001, he broke his ankle, the first of a number of setbacks. When he was able to get back into walking at the start of 2002, he and Rob parted ways and he started coaching himself at the age of 17. It meant a lot of hours doing research online, looking through what had worked for him in the past and what hadn't and really listening to his body for the first time rather than reading straight from some one else's program.

His next major outing was to be the annual Australian Junior 10km roadwalk championship at the LBG Carnival in June 2002. Alas, two days before the race, he had quite a serious car accident which resulted in permanent neck damage. *“Being 17 at the time, I still boarded the bus to Canberra the day of my accident and me being me, I pushed through the race anyway. Probably because I pushed through the race and 6 weeks later struggled through my first 30km race I didn't worry too much about getting tests and physio done- bad decisions at the age of 17.”* For the record, he finished 5th in the LBG race in a time of **49:34**.

Kim finished school at the end of 2002 and went straight into an education degree (which he eventually finished in 2007). 2003 was his last chance to compete in the Australian Junior 10km roadwalk championship at the LBG carnival

and it was a memorable race in which Aaron Mellor, Jared Tallent and Adam Rutter crossed the line together, vying for first place. Mellor was disqualified by the chief judge for poor form in the final 100m. This was applied to the Australian Championship which was awarded to Jared. But in the accompanying Federation championship, Aaron was the designated winner. In another good walk, Kim finished 5th in **47:55**. Just over 2 months later, Kim finished 2nd in the Australian Junior Men 20km roadwalk championship in a time of **1:36:47** (Jared Tallent won it in 1:33:54), thus showing at an early age that his real future was going to lie in the longer distances.



A young Kim Mottrom finishes second in the 2003 Australian Junior 20km Championship in Melbourne

Now you would expect that, after such a good 20km debut, Kim was going to improve further over the next few years and challenge the 1:30 mark. But that was not the case initially. His next championship race (the 2005 Australian U23 20km roadwalk championship) saw him third in 1:55:30 (again, Jared Tallent was the winner in 1:27:15).

*I would actually like to specifically mention the 20km I did at the start of 2005 in Sydney. I was having a number of issues during this period too and soon after that, I contacted Mark Donahoo to help me identify what the issues were and he helped me with a program for just over 3 months to get me back on track. I know in July that year I got back to **1:38:05** for 20km and **2:32:33** for 30km. Having another set of eyes on me for that period really helped reset my body and get my mind back on track as well. I used that as a platform to walk **1:33:50** for 20km in 2006 and win the 10 miler in Canberra weeks before I moved out of home that year - so as a coach it's important to be open to outside advice because it can be extremely valuable.*

Kim moved out of home soon after the 2006 Australian U23 20km championship (3rd again in 1:38) to a little unit on his own and suddenly making sure he was fit enough for big races wasn't as important as paying the bills while he was still studying and working. He did try to keep up the training and raced during that time, but just didn't prioritise racing for the next few years.

When he didn't manage to get any full time teaching work after completing his degree, he fell into office work in late 2007. At this stage, he started to develop problems with his legs - after periods of prolonged sitting he would have unexplained swelling and cramping in his lower limbs. He spent hundreds of dollars trying to figure out what the issue was but eventually only found the real cause a few months ago.

By 2009, he'd been having ongoing back issues and he had a CT scan that revealed bulging discs and a nerve impingement. So he was told by both his doctor and his physio to quit his current office job and to stop racewalking. He kept coaching for a couple of months and found that his back didn't get any better by not walking, so he decided to walk once a week to see how it responded. Leading up to the 2009 Australian Winter 20km championships, he was literally only walking Tuesdays and racing Saturdays and doing a long walk on Sundays with one of the girls he coached. He entered the 20km to show this girl that if he could do a 20km off the same training as her, she could certainly do a 5km PB. For the record, he finished as the third Australian (4th overall) in a time of **1:42:36**. That 2009 race showed what his body could do off limited training.

For the next couple of years, he continued to race regularly but off a very limited training regime. In June 2011, he contested his first LBG 20 Mile Championship, coming 11th in **3:02:25**.

By the end of 2011, he decided he had enough of office work because of the continuing leg issues and he started working as a gas meter reader - which meant lots of walking. By that stage, he weight had shot up to 80kg. With his new job and with better quality training, he shed 20kg by mid 2012.

This was Kim's second chance as a walker and he has taken it by the horns. His current PBs (all set in 2012 and 2013) show how much he has improved over the past 2 years:

1500m	6:03	20/03/2013
2000m	8:17	28/03/2012
3000m	12:16	09/11/2012
5000m	21:08	18/05/2013
10,000m	42:39	07/11/2012
15km	1:07:01	01/06/2013
10 miles	1:17:51	10/06/2012
20km	1:31:14	01/09/2013
30km	2:25:23	28/07/2012
20 miles	2:37:59	09/06/2013
50km	4:28:12	15/12/2013

He rates his 42:39 10,000m walk (7/11/2012) as his best walk so far. *“It was at 9pm on a nice summer night on the track in Adelaide and it was one of those races where you just go for it and it works. I did PB's for 5km, 8km and 10km.”*

A few recent races of significance include

- His fourth place (2:37:59) in the LBG 20 Mile Championship in Canberra in June 2012
- His win (21:39) in the Australian University Games 5000m Walk in September 2012
- His win (4:28:12) in this month's 2013 Australian 50km Championship.

The 50km championship win was also right up there in terms of what it meant and how he felt about it. *“But I hope to be much faster in May next year.”*



Kim walks 1:31:50 in the 2012 Australian 20km Championship in Adelaide in August of that year

I mentioned early in this article that it was only this year that Kim found out the cause of his leg problems.

I was out of work most of this year and in September started another office job despite my worries because I simply needed a job. A few weeks in I had an ultrasound done on my left leg, showing that my sciatic nerve actually branches off at the piriformis muscle, and partly goes through the piriformis muscle- which means ongoing sciatica unless I do everything I can do keep the piriformis muscle loose. So I had a cortisone shot in that muscle about 8 weeks before the 50km to see if that helped ease the symptoms, which it did. However, the other leg started working harder and I injured the right hamstring. I had significant swelling around the sciatic nerve in the right leg and up until 4 days before the 50km, I wasn't physically able to break 5:00 for a km. Fortunately for me, I don't let my body

tell me what I can do and I went into the 50km strapped up but determined not to worry about my legs; just to let all the training I'd done carry me through. Obviously I got my first national championship and this world cup selection which for me is incredible and I feel it's a reward for the years of hard work I've done.

Kim has also been coaching for many years now, something that is quite unusual for one so young.

I started coaching other athletes myself in 2002 and coached Sandy Brunner to her first masters world record in 2004. I've coached a number of juniors to national medals as well, and now have a group of between 10-15 walkers and runners. In the last 10 years I've completed my education degree, majoring in physical education, and recently completed my level 2 coaching course, have completed 3 years of my current degree in behavioural science and just had a lot of experience with my own body and with many different athletes with different abilities and different issues. I find coaching really helps my own walking because I don't believe in a '1 program fits all' approach. Just as I couldn't follow a generic program because of the limitations I have, I know that two athletes training for the same race have different bodies and different backgrounds. All of the athletes I coach have different programs because they have different strengths, weaknesses and needs. Addressing these and working one on one with them has helped me to really try so many different approaches which in turn has allowed me to see what works well and what doesn't and then try different things on myself. Just as I do with my athletes, I sit down and do a lot of planning for my own program and don't deviate from it unless I have circumstances that demand it. Sometimes I look at the program and don't particularly like the coach.



Kim is interviewed after winning the Australian 50km championship in December 2013

The road to his Australian vest has not been an easy one for Kim. The setbacks he has encountered along the way would have put paid to many walkers so it is to his credit that he has persevered and has come out the other end as a better walker and as a good coach. I have no doubt that in May next year in China, he is going to go a lot faster than his debut 50km time of 4:28:12.

The last word to Kim

I've always actually been passionate about my walking and any time I've disappeared for hasn't been because I've stopped trying, but because my body wasn't co-operating with me.