

LUKE ADAMS

With Luke Adams' win last weekend in the 2012 Australian 50km championship at Fawkner Park, it is timely to review the long and illustrious career of this wonderful walker. First some stats.

Luke was born 22nd October 1976 and is currently 36 years of age. Hailing originally from Sydney, he has been a scholarship athlete at the AIS for many years now and seems set to last there a bit longer, going on Sunday's fine walk.

In Australian National Championships, he has won 7 golds, 9 silvers and 4 bronzes, an enviable record by any standard.

1995 Aust. Junior 20 km Road Walk	1	1:37:28
1996 Aust. Junior 5,000m Track Walk	1	20:39.41
1996 Aust. Junior 10 km Road Walk	2	43:48
1998 Aust. Open 30 km Road Walk	2 (1st Aust.)	2:21:48
1999 Aust. Open 20 km Road Walk	3	1:23:52
2001 Aust. Open 20 km Road Walk	2	1:26:31
2002 Aust. Open 20 km Road Walk	2	1:23:56
2002 Aust. Open 50 km Road Walk	3	4:04:03
2003 Aust. Open 20 km Road Walk	1	1:23.22
2004 Aust. Open 20 km Road Walk	2	1:25:31
2005 Aust. Open 20 km Road Walk	2	1:21:39
2006 Aust. Open 20 km Road Walk	2	1:23:09
2007 Aust. Open 20 km Road Walk	1	1:25:10
2007 Aust. Open 50 km Road Walk	3	3:53:19
2008 Aust. Open 20 km Road Walk	2	1:20:32
2009 Aust. Open 20 km Road Walk	3	1:26:33
2010 Aust. Open 20 km Road Walk	2	1:22:07
2010 Aust. Open 50 km Road Walk	1	3:47:34
2011 Aust. Open 20 km Road Walk	2	1:21:00
2012 Aust. Open 50 km Road Walk	1	3:57:24

Without doubt he has compiled one of the most impressive international records in race walking. Particularly outstanding are the three Commonwealth Games silver medals, but on the world stage his seven top-10 finishes at Olympics and World Championships are superb. His list of representations includes

- 3 Olympics (2004, 2008 and 2012)
- 3 Commonwealth Games (2002, 2006 and 2010)
- 5 IAAF World Championships (2003, 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2011)
- 7 IAAF Racewalking World Cups (1999, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012)
- 19 Australian teams in the last 13 years.

Here is the full list

1994	World Junior Champs	Lisbon	10,000m	24 th	44:09.59
1999	Racewalking World Cup	Mezidon	20 km	55 th	1:30:11
2001	Summer Universiade	Marjorka	20 km	10 th	1:28:02
2002	Commonwealth Games	Manchester	20 km	2 nd	1:26:03
2002	Racewalking World Cup	Turin	50 km	29 th	4:07:08
2003	IAAF World Champs	Paris	20 km	5 th	1:19:35
2004	Racewalking World Cup	Naumburg	20 km	14 th	1:21.24
2004	Olympic Games	Athens	20 km	16 th	1:23:52
2005	IAAF World Champs	Helsinki	20km	10 th	1:21.43
2006	Commonwealth Games	Melbourne	20km	2 nd	1:21.38
2006	Racewalking World Cup	La Coruna	20km	18 th	1:22.11
2007	IAAF World Champs	Osaka	20km	7 th	1:23.52
2008	Racewalking World Cup	Cheboksary	20km	7 th	1:19.15
2008	Olympic Games	Beijing	20km	6 th	1:19.57
			50km	10 th	3:47:45
2009	IAAF World Champs	Berlin	20km	18 th	1:22.37
			50km	6 th	3:43.39
2010	Racewalking World Cup	Chihuahua	50km	DNF	
2010	Commonwealth Games	Delhi	20km	2 nd	1:22:31

2012	IAAF World Champs	Daegu	50km	4 th	3:45:31
2012	Racewalking World Cup	Saransk	20km	27 th	1:23:28
2012	Olympic Games	London	50km	26 th	3:53:41

And now onto a 2010 Athletics NSW interview with Luke, put together by David Tarbotton and Ron Bendall – see <http://www.nswathletics.org.au/news/index.cfm?fuseaction=NewsItem&NewsID=16480>. It says it all better than I could do!

ANSW: How did you start in athletics?

Luke: I began my love affair with athletics at the age of four years with Ryde Little Athletics at Dunbar Park. From that year on I never missed a season.

ANSW: What events/sports did you do in your teens?

Luke: In athletics; I always competed in every event except the pole vault as it wasn't really offered as an option and did so every year right through until the end of high school. But I did start to focus on the endurance events, running the 800, 1500, 2000m steeplechase and 3000m as well as the high jump. I started walking in high school as well. I played cricket and soccer until the last two years of high school when it became apparent I needed to focus my energy on athletics to reach my lofty goals.

ANSW: You went to the World Juniors at 17 years, but it would be another five years before you represented Australia and a further four years (aged 26y) before you made an Olympics or World Championships. What were the challenges in this period? Did you consider quitting? What advice do you have?

Luke: The biggest challenge during this period was quite simply injury. I think all the years of getting kicked in the shins and so on in soccer from a very young age pre-disposed me to some serious shin injuries and then once one thing breaks down everything seems to get unbalanced. It became a very hard road to get back to an injury free status. I even had a qualifying time for the Atlanta Olympics in 96' but injuries prevented my real progress into the world senior ranks. Before the Sydney Olympics I had surgery on my shins to rectify compartment syndrome. The surgery forced me to rush my preparations for the Olympic trials. I competed, narrowly missed the team then broke down again and had to go under the knife again.

Other challenges to me during these years were typical for a teenager becoming a young adult in a big city. Chasing girls and having a good time and wanting to do all the things your friends were doing was always a big temptation that often got the better of me. Burning the candle at both ends became my motto.

Did I consider quitting? Absolutely. Not making the big senior teams and being injured all the time while trying so hard was very disconcerting. I think I came close to stopping many times but somehow I hung in there. Actually, I remember an NSWIS talk that was arranged for athletes with former world beating stars of the sport speaking to us. On this particular occasion I think it was Ralph Doubell and John Walker speaking to us. John offered some advice that night which really helped me. He talked of his career and the various highs and lows but pointedly he talked of his "injury riddled" periods and said if you hang in there through the injured periods, sooner or later you'll get a run of no injuries and that would be the time for you. I walked away from that night with the hope of things to come, burning with ambition.

Another thing that helped me through this time was the big decision to move away from my family and friends in Sydney and the many distractions the city held for me. I moved to Canberra and started training with the best Australian walkers who were very serious and professional in their approach to the sport making them among the best in the world!

I also can't forget the biggest supporters of my career, my parents. Without their support my athletics career would have been short-lived.

ANSW: Six straight top-10s at an Olympics or Worlds is amazing. How have you been so consistent?

Luke: A number of elements are important here aside from the obvious – being highly motivated and very dedicated. The most important element I'd say is being professional. I am competing against guys who have been selected out of all their peers at a young age to pursue race walking and have trained very hard for years with every resource at their disposal. The only way to compete with such professionals is to become professional yourself in every possible way. I did have help however. After two years in Canberra I was offered an AIS scholarship. The scholarship gave me the resources I needed to train professionally. Persistence at all times is also vital.

I also had the fortune of being coached in my early years in Sydney by Yvonne Melene. She believed in me and really laid the foundations for my athletics career.

ANSW: And to that Commonwealth Games 20km walk in Delhi and the rock on the road?

Luke: Well it was a purely horrible moment for me after setting the pace throughout the entire race, making all the right moves and breaking the entire field. I had resisted easily the one attack Jared Tallent had made during the race at the 14km mark. He turned around after 17km and saw that he couldn't break me so he slowed considerably and moved aside to let me lead yet again. I put in a little teaser surge initially and then with 2.3km to go launched a big attack. I walked away from him instantly opening up a lead and then out of nowhere I hit the blob of concrete and

stumbled to the ground. I hit it quite hard and the shock and concern of injury really threw me. Just as Alberto Contador rode past Andy Schleck in the Tour De France this year when Schleck's chain came off giving him the winning break, so too Jared took his chance and surged away from me at this unfortunate time, opening up a winning margin that he retained in the final lap. So naturally I felt robbed of my chance for gold in Delhi.

ANSW: What are your goals over the next few years?

Luke: Athletically speaking I'm currently putting the training plan together for the next two years with the major goals being the Olympics in London in 2012 and the World Championships in Daegu next year. I will prepare for both the 20km and 50km events and assess my best strategy to win either or both of these events at both Championships. My goals are set at the highest level possible, now it's time to go and achieve them.

ANSW: Thanks Luke for your time and best wishes for the next few years.

And to finish off, a selection of photo highlights from Luke's long and illustrious career.



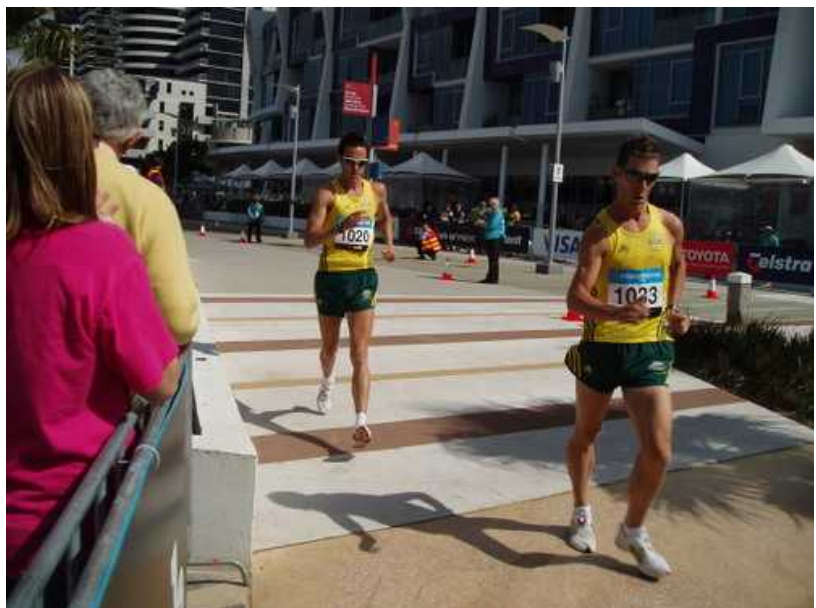
A young Luke races at Homebush in Sydney in 1997



Luke on is way to fifth place in the 20km walk in the 2003 IAAF World Championships in Paris - leading at the 11km mark.



Luke enters the stadium to take tenth place in the 2008 Olympic 50km in Beijing



Luke chases Nathan Deakes in the 2006 Commonwealth Games 20km in Melbourne - one of 3 Commonwealth Games silver medals that he has won.



Luke walking in the 20km event in the 2004 World Cup, Naumburg - 14th with 1:21.24



Luke and Jared Tallent went head to head in the 50km event at the 2009 World Championships in Berlin - they led until the 40km mark, eventually finishing 6th (Luke - 3:43:39) and 7th (Jared - 3:44:50). It's no use wondering 'what if' in an event like this. You go for it!