

SANDY BRUNNER DOMINATES THE RUN

I like to focus on walkers when the time seems appropriate and that is certainly the case at the moment for South Australian Masters athlete **Sandy Brunner**. Better known as a walker, Sandy recently broke the **W70 World Masters 3000m Run Record** with a time of 13:21.93 – a pretty good transition from walking to running considering that she started including running in her training less than a year ago! I interviewed Sandy a few days ago via email to find out a bit more about her career.

How long have you been running and walking?

Until just recently I had no previous history of running so for me, race walking came first. At the age of 60 I walked our State's biggest fun run, the 12km City to Bay as a regular walker. I enjoyed the experience and decided I'd like to try and walk faster. In 2002 I started walking with Deryck Skinner who later went on to become a Centurion. At the end of 2002 I met Kim Mottrom walking along the Torrens River in Adelaide and in March 2003 I asked him (I actually ambushed him) if he would coach me.

Your first really big walk was in 2004 in Melbourne when you broke the W60 20km World Record.

In my first two years of walking, I walked a marathon and no less than 10 half marathons. This gave me the endurance and perfect foundation to break the W60 20km walk world record in Melbourne. Over the next few years I lowered the W60 Australian Records in 3000m-15km walks and in New Zealand in 2006 I set new W60 Oceania Records for the 3000m, 5000m and 10km.

Editor's note: On Sunday 24th May 2004, when VRWC hosted its annual 20km Club Championships at Middle Park, Sandy came across with her coach Kim. My race report at the time read as follows:

Sandy has only been walking for a short time and is being coached by SA walker Kim Mottrom. On Sunday she broke the World and Australian records for the W60 20 km racewalk. Her time of 1:57:42.2 broke the previous world record of 2:02:56 by over 5 minutes. Technically she looked to have plenty in reserve and I think we may soon see this mark being lowered again. Her splits show a very even race: 11:41, 23:27, 35:18, 47:04, 58:48, 70:34, 82:22, 94:13, 105:59, 117:42.2

You have had more than your fair share of injuries in recent years?

Moving into the W65 age group, my body was beginning to feel the effects of all the long races. I was soon to become my physiotherapist's new best friend. Injuries unrelated to walking were torn ligaments; one caused a fracture, and a broken toe. I had a long stint of bursitis in my glutes and underwent an arthroscopy on my left knee in 2007. Unfortunately the knees started showing signs of osteo arthritis so it was becoming increasingly harder to satisfy the judges. I kept pushing myself and Kim continued to encourage me and fine tune my technique, looking ahead to moving into the W70 age group. At the end of July we introduced some running into my walking program to keep my fitness levels while focusing on my walking technique.



*Left: Sandy on her way to her W60 20km World Record in Melbourne in 2004
Right: January 2011 – Sandy walks 19:56 for 3km at Middle Park – still walking well despite the injuries*

When was the decision finally made to move from walking to running?

At the end of 2011 and three months before I turned 70, Kim and I both agreed that my knees just weren't

responding to all the extra work we were doing and Kim suggested I run 1-2 times a week. At the start of 2012 we decided walking was no longer an option and we put 100% of our efforts into running. Walking has been my passion; it helped me through a very difficult period in my life and gave me the opportunity to meet some amazing people. Letting go was never going to be easy.

Your progress in running has been pretty sensational!

Between the start of the summer season and March 2012, I had broken 8 State records for 3000m and 5000m running events. Around February I decided I might be good at running 10km as well so, although I'd never run anything over 5km, I started doing a couple of longer runs on a Saturday morning.

Heading over to the AMA championships in Melbourne, just after I turned 70, I was able to run 48:31 for 10km, my fifth ever 10km and my first 10km race, which fortunately was 28 seconds under the national record. Two days later I ran 23:02 for 5000m, a 15 second PB and 19 seconds under the national record.

Coming back to Adelaide the next weekend I wanted to try and break the 3000m national record of 14:17 rather than wait until next summer. My PB was 13:44 so I was confident I could go under the national record time but not the world record time of 13:24.78. The day of the race though I was very aggressive with my approach and ran PBs for 1km, 1500m, 2000m and ultimately 3000m. Unlike when I did my 20km walk record, this world record of 13:21.93 was a total surprise.



Sandy on the podium at the AMA Champs in Melbourne in April 2012 – two races for two W70 Australian running records

Any final words?

Leaving walking behind I didn't know what to expect from running, having never been a runner. It has been a whole new learning experience for me. I have enormous confidence in my coach and having my support team, Kim and Justin Hill my lap scorer, with me for the AMA championships and at Santos for the All Comers was amazing, I couldn't ask for anything more.

Well done Sandy on your wonderful Masters career – may you have many more runs and may the records continue to fall!

Tim Erickson
24 April 2012