

## STAN MALBUT – RACEWALKING NATIONAL EVENT COACH, 1981 - 1985

Stan Malbut is well known to Australian walkers as our Racewalking National Event Coach from 1981 to 1985. But there is a lot more to say about Stan so here goes. Special thanks to Bob Cruise for information gleaned from his 2009 book 'A History of Race Walking in South Australia'. The rest is taken from a couple of long phone calls with Stan!



**Stan in walking mode in 1970**

Stan was born in North Shields, just outside Newcastle in the county of Northumberland in England on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1932 and, even though he migrated to Australia in 1963, when you hear him talk it is still obvious to all that he is 'Geordie'.

Stan started his sporting career as a cyclist – he got his first bike two months after the Second World War ended, at 13 years of age, and never looked back. His big breakthrough came at the age of 19 when he was roped into riding the Brighton to Glasgow 6 Day stage race. It was a tough initiation and after two days of racing he was spent. Team management wanted to withdraw him but he was adamant that he could continue – and continue he did, climbing to fourth place overall at the end of 5 days. It was only a snapped chain 9 miles from Glasgow on the final stage that prevented a huge finish and he had to be content with 13<sup>th</sup> overall after losing some 5 minutes. But he had found his niche -as a stages rider. The future looked bright.

Unfortunately, the British Government had different ideas and he was conscripted to the army (this was the days of compulsory National Service) on his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. For the next two years, he served as a member of the Coldstraem Guards (one of Britain's top army regiments) as a bombardier. He was a crack marksman and a member of the regimental team, winning trophies for his rifle shooting expertise. However, his cycling career stalled as he was given little if any opportunity to train and none to race. When he was eventually demobbed two years later, he was starting from scratch once again.

It took a year of hard work to get a semblance of fitness back and then another year of solid racing before his form really returned. In 1957 he was the Northern England champion and in 1958 he competed in the Tour of Britain, the ultimate contest for English riders.

Alas, this marked the end of Stan's riding career. Married with one small child and a second on the way, he could no longer spare the many hours required to compete at the top level - few sports require as many hours of training as cycling and Stan had other commitments.

Little did Stan know what his future held when he arrived in Australia from England in June 1963 with his wife Shiela and 3 daughters, aged 7, 4 and 1 years. He was eventually talked into taking on the bikes again and actually captained the South Australian cycling team at the 1966 Australian titles. Then life took a further unexpected turn when he and Shiela became the proud parents of twin girls – making a grand total of 5 daughters. There was no more time for even social cycling!

In 1967, Central Districts Athletics Club was formed and, within a month, Stan became a member along with his two eldest daughters Lesley and Dianne. His interest in racewalking began when Lesley won the 800m walking event in Interclub competition. As all good fathers do, Stan started taking her to all the racewalking events around the State. Unable to find the right coach, he took on the role himself.

Not surprisingly, walking club members attempted to entice Stan to walk. After all, he was there with his daughter. After a number of approaches, Bill Starr finally convinced him to have a go. His first race was an 8km event in which he started first and finished last. He subsequently said "It was a horrible experience and I suffered badly". However, not to be beaten, he decided to give the sport a go and by 1969 was a regular at South Australian walking events.

In 1970, British international walker Peter Fullager arrived in Australia. Stan first saw him walk in the South Australian 50km championship and they soon became friends, a friendship that endures to this day. Stan eventually took on the role as Peter's adviser and he learnt a lot during the seventies from his experiences with Peter. Their many discussions on various aspects of fitness, training methods and tactics quickly made him a knowledgeable walking coach.

Stan's own walking career flourished, even though he was now nearing forty. He won three Gawlor to Adelaide events during the seventies and was a regular member of SA walking teams along with Peter Fullager, Tim Thompson, Frank Leonard, Peter Whitham and others. His best interstate performance was probably in 1975 when, along with Fullager and Thompson, he was part of the SA team which won the Canberra 20 Mile teams event, inflicting one of very few defeats on the strong Victorian contingent.

Stan's increasing commitment to coaching (four or five times a week) limited his ability to train as he would like and he realised that his own competitive career was coming to an end. In 1979, he and his wife Shiela returned to the UK for a seven week holiday. Whilst there, he participated in the famous London to Brighton race, the longest classic on the British walking fixture. He finished the 53 mile (85 km) race in around 9½ hours and it remains one of his competitive highlights.

Back in Australia, he hung up his walking shoes and made coaching his number one priority. He worked hard to achieve his Australian Track & Field Coaches Association (AT&FCA) Level 3 certification (he was in fact one of the first walking coaches in Australia to attain what was then the highest accreditation possible) and continues coaching nowadays with his abiding interest in walking biomechanics and walking efficiency.



**September 2009 - Stan with coaching charges Jessica Stephens, Kelly Watson, Kristie Gosnik and Darren Bown**

AT&FCA had been founded in 1974 as an association for all track and field coaches. It was as a result of a concerted push from AT&FCA that National Event Coach (NEC) positions were finally advertised in 1979. A dearth of qualified walking coaches presented a quandary as a Racewalking National Event coach was amongst the required NECs. The closest they had was Victorian John Boas, better known as a jumps coach (he coached Ken Lorroway, Gary Honey and Ian Campbell amongst others) but also with a finger in the walking pie (as he also coached me). John had already been given the role of Jumps NEC and he was asked to temporarily take on the role of Racewalking NEC until someone suitable could be found. John enthusiastically threw himself into his dual roles and I remember attending a number of camps and testing opportunities during his time.

By 1981, Stan had the runs on the board and had his AT&FCA Level 3 certification so he was asked to apply for the Racewalking NEC job. Stan's application was of course accepted and he took over the walks role from John that same year. He subsequently held the position for 4 years until the baton was passed to AIS walks coach Craig Hilliard in 1985.

Stan was an enthusiastic and gregarious NEC who travelled to all major championships and who ran various training

camps in all States. When approached by any walker, he freely gave his time and expertise and was well liked and respected by all our senior walkers. The NEC role ran on a shoestring budget at this time and he spent considerable time trying to get the necessary funding to run camps and cover his own considerable costs.

When he finished his stint as Racewalking NEC, his national role ended but he has continued to coach enthusiastically within South Australia and he has influenced a wide number of walkers over the years. Some names that spring to mind include Ian Fay, Craig Topperwein, Bernadette Jenner, Sandra Kramer, Darren Bown and Greg Wolszczak.

With his children now grown up and his NEC role finished, he was finally free to resume some cycling. With typical enthusiasm, he threw himself back into racing the bikes. When I retired from racewalking at the end of 1983, I also moved to the bikes and Stan and I had many an enjoyable and competitive hitout. I well remember in 1986 when he teamed up with 5 other riders (including a blind rider on a tandem) to attempt the AUDAX 24 Hour Bike Ride. Teams could choose their own distance, start from a designated point and then ride to Melbourne. Stan's team chose a distance of 570km and started at Mt Gambier in South Australia. They duly arrived in Melbourne 24 hours later, having achieved a new Australian endurance cycling record for 24 Hours.

Now aged 76, Stan is still riding the bikes, still an active member of the Central Districts Cycling Club and still competing regularly with the South Australian Veterans. And, of course he is still coaching racewalkers some 42 years after he first started in 1967.

Tim Erickson  
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