

## Quentin Rew: 2011-2016

2011	IAAF World Champs	Daegu	50km	23 <sup>rd</sup>	4:08:46
2012	Olympic Games	London	50km	27 <sup>th</sup>	3:55:03
2013	IAAF World Champs	Moscow	50km	17 <sup>th</sup>	3:50:27
2014	Racewalking World Cup	Taicang	50km	12 <sup>th</sup>	3:50:22
2015	IAAF World Champs	Beijing	20km	17 <sup>th</sup>	1:22:18
2015	IAAF World Champs	Beijing	50km	10 <sup>th</sup>	3:48:48
2016	Racewalking World Cup	Rome	20km	26 <sup>th</sup>	1:21:54
2016	Olympic Games	Rio de Janeiro	20km	DQ	
2016	Olympic Games	Rio de Janeiro	50km	12 <sup>th</sup>	3:49:32

Quentin Rew was born 16<sup>th</sup> July 1984 in the New Zealand city of Wellington.

His early career was spent as a middle distance runner. His PBs indicate that he was a respectable runner but not a champion - 1:59 (800m), 3:57 (1500m), 15:29 (5000m), 32:01 (10,000m) and 1:13:20 (half marathon).

*If you know anything about middle/long distance running you will guess from these stats that I occasionally won races, but none of national significance.*

He swapped to racewalking at the end of 2008, aged 24. At that stage he had had an achilles injury for about 5 years, so it was time to give running away and look for something different.

Quentin's first forays into national level walking in 2009 were promising - 1<sup>st</sup> in the NZ 20km in March (**1:40:10**), 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Australian 20km in August (**1:33:22**) and 1<sup>st</sup> in the NZ 50km in October (**4:52:55**).

In 2010 he showed considerable improvement, sweeping the pool on the local front with wins in all 3 NZ racewalk championships: 3000m (**12:31.64**), 20km (**1:32:20**) and 50km (**4:25:19**). He also improved his 20km PB to **1:29:11** with an additional win in the Racewalking Auckland Championships.

He was invited by AIS walks coach Brent Vallance to their annual training camp, to be held in the NSW alpine village of Thredbo in January 2011. It was an eye opener. The speed and endurance of the internationals and the top Australians was on another level completely. It was an initiation by fire but everyone was supportive and it was a positive experience that left him wanting more.



*January 2011 - Quentin (centre) is exhausted after a session of 5x2km at Thredbo. Brent Vallance at left and Blake Steele at right. A case of initiation by fire.*

The impact was immediate, with golds and big PBs in the 2011 NZ 3000m championship (**11:51:59**) and the NZ 20km championship (**1:27:47**), both held in March.

April saw his first real international race when he participated in the IAAF Challenge event in Taicang, China, in late April. This proved to be a significant breakthrough, with a 50km finishing time of 4:06:57.

In early June, as a corollary to this performance, Quentin was named in his first NZ athletics team, to compete at the IAAF World T&F Championships in Daegu, South Korea. In only 2 years, he had forced his way into the top echelon of walkers.

His training leading into the World Championships was simple. He would get home from work, put his shoes on, leave the house, walk for quite a long time, then return. His initiation into team life come Daegu was anything but simple.

*I was independent, requiring only my shoes and a stopwatch. After all, racewalking is a fundamentally simple sport. But try telling that to the 'support team' in Hong Kong. They asked what I needed for training. I said I needed to be pointed in the general direction of some flat-ish ground to walk on. What I ended up with was an army of helpers: waterboys, stopwatch-holders, gait-filmers, pace-analysers, the list goes on. Of course, my superstar team-mates didn't bat an eyelid at all the attention, because for them it was normal. For me it was baffling.*

His Daegu result was a good one - 23<sup>rd</sup> in the 50km with a time of **4:08:46** - but not good enough. The New Zealand 2012 Olympic qualifying time had been set at 3:59:00.

Being based in Wellington, with time running out and with a paucity of legitimate 50km races globally, this qualification was not a straightforward matter. If he was going to accomplish that goal, it would take an all-or-nothing visit to the other side of the world, by himself, and into the unknown. He would go to Dudince.

But first things first. As in 2011, he spent January 2012 at Thredbo as part of the yearly AIS camp. But unlike 2011, this time around he was a much more competitive walker.

Then it was off to Hobart as part of the New Zealand team which would compete against the Australians for the Oceania Race Walking Trophy at their national 20km championship. His final time of **1:30:01** does not tell the full story - the race was held late on the Saturday afternoon in a record temperature of 38°C. Overall, only 12 of the 23 men finished and only 9 of the 16 women finished. Quentin finished 7<sup>th</sup>, a good effort under the circumstances.

Fast forward one month to March 2012 and he departed for Europe, on a mission as close to pass-or-fail as athletics ever gets.

*I had to walk 50km in under 3:59.00. Doing so would secure my place in the greatest show on Earth. Failure would mean, as George Gregan once said, four more years. I was only just in shape to do the time, so everything had to be pretty close to perfect. And, as it happened, it was. My final time of **3:58.48** didn't leave much room for error, but it didn't need to. If it was a pass-or-fail test, I passed. And if 12 seconds could ever be described as 'life changing' then I guess those were them.*

He was duly added to the New Zealand Olympic team and completed his final preparations with a four week stint in St Moritz before joining the NZ team in Cardiff for the final pre-London camp.



*St Moritz and training with the Aussies - Brent Vallance on the bike and with Chris Erickson alongside*

He had done five 50km races now and figured out that a top-16 placing in London would require a time of around 3:53:00, judging from past Olympic performances and the current crop of athletes. His PB was 3:58.48, so he had find an additional 6 minutes. He knew that he was in the best shape of his life, but starting the race too quickly could be disastrous.

As it transpired, that pace he set for himself had him dead last at 5km. Even worse, he had received 2 red cards by the 15km mark. From then on, he had to try to put all doubts aside, work his way up through the field and simply concentrate on walking as well as he could. The final result - 27<sup>th</sup> with 3:55:03.

*All things considered, I don't think that I could have gone any faster on the day. I did not achieve my stated goal of a top-16 finish, but underpinning that goal was the desire to 'perform well at the Olympics' - and I can put my hand on heart and say I achieved that.*



*Left: Quentin works his way up through the field in the London Olympic 50km  
Right: Spent at the finish - nowhere to hide in a 50km walk!*

He now realized he needed a base nearer to the action so after the London Olympics, he moved to the northern English city of Leeds, where he worked as a physiotherapist and trained out of the UK Race Walking Centre at Leeds Metropolitan University.

*The experience was a positive one and I felt I achieved my objectives there, which were to improve my speed in shorter races (3km-20km), and improve on my technical efficiency and economy.*

The change in training was fuelled by a realization that all world-class 50km athletes are also excellent at 20km. As of 2012, his best 20km times were relatively slow, and he knew that to improve over long races he had to improve over shorter races. That was not a sudden revelation. Ever since he had first trained with international athletes more than two years previously, he had been acutely aware he was the black sheep (perhaps fitting for the sole Kiwi in the flock of walkers). Aside from having a different motherland, everyone he trained with trained fast. And raced fast. Despite what he thought to be a dangerous lack of mileage, his training partners were blitzing the world and walking times he could only dream of.

In the last few months of 2012, he was barely walking over 100km a week, but every time he walked out the door he went fast. Nothing over 5 minutes per km, and an overall average of around 4:45 per km.

Racing season proper started in February with the Ireland indoor champs, including a 5000m race walk where he finished in **19.52**, with a bit of gas still in the tank. A fortnight later it was a road 10km in **40.20**. Another fortnight later the distance doubled again with a 20km in Lugano, Switzerland, where he finished in a 5 minute PB with **1:22.56**. His early season racing finished with a win in the international 20km racewalk in Naumburg, Germany, and yet another 20km PB with **1:22:16**.

After another stint of altitude work at St Moritz, he fronted for the World Championships in Moscow, where he finished 17<sup>th</sup> in the 50km with a PB time of **3:50:27**.

With no Commonwealth Games walks scheduled for 2014, it was a relatively quiet year with only the World Racewalking Cup in May. His early season form was good - a win in the England and Wales Combined Events Championship 3000m indoor track walk in January ( **11:17.66**) and a win in March in the Molly Barnett 10km walk in Coventry (a huge PB of **39:51**).

Surprisingly, he did not click for the 2014 IAAF World Racewalking Cup performance in Taicang. On paper it looked like a good result - 12<sup>th</sup> place and a new 50km PB of **3:50:22** - but he knew it could have been much better. The PB was by a mere 5 seconds.



*2014 Racewalking World Cup in Taicang - Quentin races with Chris Erickson in the 50km - little separates these two walkers who have featured together in many races*

As July 2014 drew to a close, so did his 2 year work permit and he was forced to consider his next move. He packed his bags and headed to America where he spent August and September high in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. It was a great block of high-mileage, high-altitude training, but speed work took very much a back seat. Then it was off to China for the 4 day Lake Taihu Classic before heading to Australia for six-week training camp at the AIS in Canberra. There, he managed to push out another big training block, consistently around 200km per week, all at a good pace (averaging well under 5 minutes per km) and with the added challenge of living in the altitude house.

There was the chance of one final race for the year with the annual Athletics Australia 20km race at Fawkner Park in Melbourne in mid December. It was an exciting race as Quentin and Isamu Fujisawa (Japan) set out at a blistering pace, swapping the lead lap by lap until Isamu eventually broke away in the final 4km to win by 6 seconds with 1:22:05. Quentin was under pressure with two early red cards but he settled down and continued to shadow his rival all the way, never giving up hope of winning. His final time of **1:22:11** was a 5 sec PB and bettered his own NZ record.

Then finally home to New Zealand for some time with the family in Wellington. This break allowed him the opportunity to race over 3000m on the track in Wellington in late January. The result was a New Zealand record of **11:15.2**.

It was then time to pack his bags and head to Melbourne to setup a more permanent base. But hardly had he arrived in Melbourne and he was off to Adelaide for the Australian 20km championships (2<sup>nd</sup> to Jared Tallent in a slow 1:25:22 in very hot conditons), then off for further races in Texas and Mexico on successive weekends.

Since packing up his life from Leeds in July 2014, he had now been constantly on the move for 9 months. In those nine months his travels have taken me through Greece, Turkey, Rhode Island, Canada, Colorado, China, back to New Zealand, Australia, New Zealand again, Australia again, Texas and Mexico. Now in March 2015, he finally managed to unpack his suitcase in Melbourne.

He raced the first half of the VRWC winter season, winning the LBG 20 Miler in Canberra in June with an inaugural time of 2:21:17. Then it was off to St Moritz again for some more altitude work before the IAAF World Championships in Beijing.

His Moscow races were excellent - 17<sup>th</sup> in the 20km with **1:22:18** and 10<sup>th</sup> in the 50km in a **PB 3:48:48**. He had finally made the top 10 in a big international championship. Now it was time to plan towards the 2016 Olympics.

Suffice it to say 2016 did not begin as he had hoped.

*My first two races, in Adelaide and Juarez, yielded a DQ and a DNF. The three week block of altitude in January was plagued with logistical problems. Three months of earnest effort to improve my technique did not yield the desired results. At one point, even the homeless guy living in a nook of the MCG started giving me sympathetic advice.*

After his Juarez race in Mexico, it was yet another training camp, spending April at altitude in Flagstaff, Arizona.



*The life of a professional athlete - on camp in Arizona in April 2016. Ben Thorne, Katie Burnett, Nick Christie, Rhydian Cowley, Evan Dunfee, Brendon Reading, Jared Tallent, Quentin Rew and Inaki Gomez*

This did the trick and he bounced back in May with a great 20km race in the IAAF World Racewalking Team Championships in Rome - 26<sup>th</sup> in a PB of **1:21:54**, a new NZ record. It was a great meet for New Zealand with Alana Barber also excelling, recording 1:32:48 for her own NZ record.

Then it was back to Melbourne for some more races (2<sup>nd</sup> in the LBG 20 Miler with 2:21:26) before heading off to St Moritz once again to put the finishing touches to his Olympic prep.

His Rio results were a mixed bag. He was disqualified in the 20km walk but bounced back with a solid performance in sweltering conditions in the 50km - 12<sup>th</sup> with **3:49:32**. It was another top result but it did not come easily. He had lacked the sparkle of 2015.



*Some of the Commonwealth walkers at the Rio Olympics - Quentin Rew, Chris Erickson, Brendon Reading, Evan Dunfee, Ben Thorne, Inaki Gomez and Jared Tallent*

Any long term concerns were soon allayed. After a good break back in Melbourne, he headed to Canberra for a 6 week training camp at the AIS, spread over January and the early part of February. Then it was straight to Adelaide for the Australian 20km championships and 3<sup>rd</sup> place with a 20km PB of **1:21:12**.

No rest for the wicked! It was now straight onto the plane for Mexico, with a 20km race in Ciudad Juarez (14<sup>th</sup> in 1:25:30) and a 50km race in Monterey (3<sup>rd</sup> in **3:51:18**).

Now Quentin is back in Melbourne and preparing for the 2017 IAAF World Championships in London. The signs are promising. He is putting in the big miles and training fast and hard, yet looking fresh.

Quentin also has one final New Zealand record to take - the 50km time of 3:48.04, held by Craig Barrett. He has already taken Barrett's 3000m track and 20km road walk records and in Beijing he was just 44 seconds short in the 50km.

In finishing this article, I refer all readers to Quentin's blog at <http://morethanracewalking.blogspot.com.au/>. It makes for superb reading and gives further insight into a walker who thinks deeply on his sport and its place in the world of athletics.

Tim Erickson  
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