

ANDREW JACHNO

1982	Commonwealth Games	Brisbane	30 km	9 th	2:24:15
1983	World Walking Champs	Bergen	20 km	25 th	1:25:50
1984	Olympic Games	Los Angeles	50 km	DNF	
1985	World Student Games	Kobe	20 km	15 th	
1985	Racewalking World Cup	Isle of Man	20 km	27 th	1:29:00
1987	Racewalking World Cup	New York	20 km	37 th	1:25:58
1987	IAAF World Champs	Rome	20 km	12 th	1:25:50
1987	World Indoor Champs	Indianapolis	5,000m	15 th	20:19
1987	World Student Games	Zagreb	20 km	4 th	1:27:39
1988	Olympic Games	Seoul	20 km	28 th	1:24:50
1988	Olympic Games	Seoul	50 km	19 th	3:53:33
1989	World Indoor Champs	Budapest	5,000m	8 th	19:25
1989	Racewalking World Cup	Barcelona	20 km	65 th	1:30:01
1989	World Student Games	Duisburg	20 km	3 rd	1:23:48
1990	Commonwealth Games	Auckland	30 km	2 nd	2:09:09
1990	Goodwill Games	Seattle	20,000m	7 th	1:25:44
1991	World Indoor Champs	Seville	5,000m	DQ in final	
1991	Racewalking World Cup	San Jose	20 km	59 th	1:28:42
1992	Olympic Games	Barcelona	20 km	31 st	1:36:49

Andrew Jachno, born 13th April 1962, was yet another product of the Melbourne Little Athletics scene. While his rise to prominence was rapid at senior level, it followed a long and illustrious junior career. He had won titles in every Victorian age group from Under 13 to Under 20.

While still a junior, he finished second in the Australian Open 3000m Track title in 1982 in **12:09**. At that time, he held the Australian Junior records for 1500m (**5:37**), 5000m (**21:30.5**), 10 km (**44:24**) and 20 km (**1:30:32**).

Coming out of junior ranks, he started to train with Tim Erickson and Dave Smith and his success in senior ranks was immediate. Coming off 4th place in the 1982 Victorian 30 km title in **2:24:04**, he surprised his senior opponents with a solid performance to finish 2nd to Willi Sawall in the Commonwealth Games 30 km trial in **2:19:55**. This earned him selection in his first National team and he finished a creditable 9th at the Games in Brisbane. Although fighting injury at the time, he recorded a time of **2:24:15**.

In the 1983 National 5000m track title, he was 3rd in **20:56** and he followed this up with 2nd in the Victorian 20 km in **1:28:02** and 4th in the National 20 km title in Adelaide in **1:29:23**. This gained him selection for the 1983 World Walking Championships and in Bergen he finished 18th in **1:25:50**, beating the Olympic standard (which had been set for 1:26:00).

He came out for the 1983/84 summer season full of confidence and his win in the Victorian 5000m title in a championship best time of **19:41.8** was outstanding.

Olympic selection seemed assured but an infected wisdom tooth changed everything. He walked the 20 km trial on painkillers and could only manage a disappointing 6th place in **1:35:46**. That meant he would miss Olympic selection unless he tried for the 50 km event. Once his wisdom teeth had been taken out, he was back into training and he surprised everyone, winning the Australian 50 km title in **4:01:02**, 9 minutes under the Olympic qualifying standard and the second fastest time ever by an Australian. It was his first 50 km event and an impressive debut.

After the event, he said *“I was close to retiring from the event several times because of cramps in both legs. I had to stop very half kilometre to massage my hamstrings but I had a bit of reserve and was able to finish”*.



Andrew struggled to a slow finish in the 1984 Olympic 20 km trial in Centennial Park in Sydney, suffering from an infected wisdom tooth. But he still shows good style.

Unfortunately the Los Angeles Olympic 50 km was held in 100^oF heat on a course with no shade. Andrew was one of the 60% of the field who failed to finish.

Bouncing back from this disappointment, he was 2nd to Simon Baker in the 1985 National 20 km title in **1:26:22** and was selected in the Racewalking World Cup team to compete in the Isle of Man. His 27th place of **1:29:00** was slightly down on his 1983 performance but still a fine finish in the top half of the field.

In 1986, the Commonwealth Games 30 km trial was held in Canberra and it proved to be the most competitive trial ever. Of the 4 top competitors, it was Andrew who narrowly missed out, coming in 4th behind Dave Smith, Simon Baker and Willi Sawall. His time of **2:15:05** would normally have ensured selection but the quality of the field saw Andrew miss out on a second Commonwealth Games birth. That would have to wait a further 4 years.

1987 was perhaps his best year so far with a host of international berths that included the World Indoor 5000m in Indianapolis (15th in **20:19**), the World Student Games in Zagreb (4th in **1:27:39**), the Racewalking World Cup in New York (37th in **1:25:58**) and the IAAF World Championships in Rome (12th in **1:25:50**).

In 1988, he was finally awarded an AIS scholarship and moved to Canberra. There he was able to team up with Simon Baker, a training combination that helped them both in their final preparations for Seoul. He was 2nd to Simon in the National 20 km title in a PB of **1:22:29** and this gained him Olympic selection. He then won the Federation 10 km title in **40:15** in Melbourne and won the Victorian 50 km in **4:04:09** to also qualify for the Olympic 50 km event.

His 28th place in Seoul in the 20 km walk in **1:24:50** was followed by an even better performance in the 50 km – 19th in **3:53:33**. It was a PB by some 8 minutes and placed him third in the Australian all time 50 km rankings. The great Olympic performances by Andrew and Simon Baker gained them invitations to walk the New York marathon. Andrew finished in 3 hrs 24 mins, one minute ahead of Simon.



Andrew in action in the 20 km walk in the IAAF Worlds in Rome in 1987

1989 saw Andrew once again recording great times. After a **39:50** win in a 10,000m track walk at the Canberra Seiko meeting and a world indoor 3000m qualifying time, he was due to win another major championship. He did this in the LBG 20 mile title in **2:27:19**. He also represented Australia at the World Student Games and came a fine 3rd in **1:23:48**.

In October 1989 in the 1990 Commonwealth Games trial, Andrew and Simon Baker crossed the line together in **2:10:53** on a course held around the inner Melbourne streets near Olympic Park. Neither had peaked for the event.

In January 1990 in Auckland in the Commonwealth Games 30 km walk, Andrew was one of the favourites to win gold but disaster struck. He had taken a gamble, setting a sizzling pace to cover the first 10 km in **42:11** and establish a big break over the eventual winner, LeBlanc of Canada. He was still well ahead at the 20 km mark but an impending cramp slowed him and, by the 24 km, he was overhauled by the Canadian. Further cramping prevented him staying with LeBlanc who broke away at the 27 km mark. It was agonising to watch the last few kilometres on TV as Andrew struggled home for 2nd place in **2:09:09**.

His medal at the Commonwealth Games gave him new confidence and he scored a brilliant win in the National 5000m track title in **19:29.8**, beating Nick A'Hern and Simon Baker. He then moved into the winter season, winning the Victorian 30 km title in **2:11:49**. He then won the LBG 20 mile title 2 weeks later in **2:27:19** and followed up with wins in the Victorian 20 km title (**1:21:31**) and the National 20 km title in Brisbane in **1:20:43**. But it was only after a super effort that he beat Nick A'Hern who set a scorching pace for 8 km before he succumbed to his stronger opponent. It was yet another PB for Andrew, his 13th Australian Championship medal and his 3rd gold. That year he was also invited to the prestigious Goodwill Games and he came 7th in the 20,000m track walk in **1:25:44**. The race was held in Seattle in Canada in searing 40°C heat. 1990 was definitely his best year to date.

In 1991, he started the year in sizzling form. On January 6, he won the Victorian 10,000m trackwalk title in **39:29**. On January 26 he beat the up-and-coming Nick A'Hern in the Seiko Meeting 5000m track walk. His time of **19:14.8** was second only to Dave Smith's best of 18:52. On late January, he recorded **11:09.1** for a 3000m Interclub event in scorching heat in Canberra. Then on February 7, he recorded **10:56.22** for the

3000m walk at the NEC Classic meeting at Olympic Park in Melbourne. This was an Australian and Commonwealth record and it still stands today some 11 years later.

Although both he and Simon had been selected for the 1991 World Indoors, Simon was sidelined with a broken collar bone (compliments of a bike accident) and Andrew repped along with Nick A'Hern. In somewhat controversial circumstances he was disqualified in the final. Yet his style was thought to be exemplary and he had recorded a series of top pace preliminary races with excellent technique.

He then recorded a disappointing 59th place (**1:28:42**) in the World Walking Championship 20 km in San Jose. Tests showed he had glandular fever. He withdrew from the 1991 IAAF World Championship team as the illness lingered.

As 1992 started, Andrew seemed to have overcome his illness and he captured the ACT 5000m title in a quick **20:05.5**. But just when he seemed to be back on track, a critical nerve problem put his athletic career on hold again. Applying ice to a sore knee, he froze one of the key nerves in the knee and electrical impulses to the shin were impaired. The diagnosis – wait for it to repair naturally – the timeframe 3 to 6 months.

With his preparation in tatters, he looked like having to miss the Olympic 20 km trial which was held in Adelaide in conjunction with the National Track and Field Titles. AIS physio Peter Stanton came to the rescue and devised a contraption using a bicycle inner – the tube was attached to the shoelaces and taped under the kneecap. The result – the toes were held firm at 90° to the shin and he had the necessary control to pull the foot forward.

Some people questioned the legality of the device but it was ruled by A.A. to be within the rules and he was able to line up for the trial. He struggled in in 3rd place in **1:23:36**. A few days later he fronted for the Australian 5000m track title which became an unforgettable 3 way tussle between him, Dave Smith and Simon Baker. Dave eventually won in 19:23 and Andrew crossed the line in 2nd place, only a couple of seconds behind, to find that the referee had ruled his support strap illegal and disqualified him.

This raised a whole new controversy as to whether his 20 km place should be reviewed. But common sense prevailed and the 20 km result was ratified. He was named in the Olympic B squad and, with the shin responding to treatment, he was off to Europe to chase further performances to confirm his selection.

In May he had a series of races that showed he was regaining form. First he placed 2nd in the German Olympic Games 20 km trial in **1:21:37**, then followed this up with **38:49** for 2nd place in a road 10 km event in Copenhagen and a week later finished 4th in a track 20 km in Bergen, recording **1:21:34.1** for a new Victorian record. But the races took a toll on his limited preparation and he faded in the heat at Barcelona to finish a disappointed 31st place in **1:36:49**. This was his last international walk.

In December, he fronted for the Lugano Cup 50 km trial in Melbourne but managed only 40 km in the heat before retiring. This was the end for him and early in 1993, he retired from racewalking and handed back his AIS scholarship. He had spent some 12 years at the top of racewalking in Australia and had battled and overcome a series of injuries and setbacks. His strength and speed saw him set a series of outstanding PBs from all distances from 1500m to 50 km. He was a great all rounder but undoubtedly his greatest performance remains his National and Commonwealth 3000m time of 10:56.22.