

Beth Alexander – 2010

2010	World Racewalking Cup	Chihuahua	U20 10km	12 th	50:56
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Beth Alexander, born 28 November 1992, started her athletics career aged 6 at Knox Little Athletics Centre in suburban Melbourne. In this regard, she followed the early exposure path common to most of our elite walkers.

She first decided to explore racewalking as an 8 year old, after she won a local race and one of the walk judges suggested that she should start training. David Blackwood was suggested as a good local coach. Beth was hesitant initially but soon began training with David once a week.

After winning the Victorian Little Athletics championships in U9 and U11 and coming 2nd to Rachel Tallent in U10, Beth was enjoying her walking more and more. In 2005, David suggested she start getting more races under her belt and he took her to the Victorian Race Walking Club at Middle Park. This was the first time she had done any road walking and she took to it immediately.



August 2005 – Beth's first season at Albert Park – walking alongside Hilary Brazel

Beth stayed with David Blackwood for 6 years. But he was a developmental coach and she eventually found that there were few walkers in his group who could match her speed. So she followed Siobhan Donovan and Regan Lambie who had recently left to go to Simon Baker. It was a good move as Simon's group at that time had a large number of similarly aged and talented walkers - Regan Lambie, Sarah and Amy Burren, Tamara and Bianca Attard, Brad Simpson and on the odd occasion Jess Rothwell.

Beth is a good example of a talented Little Athletics walker who continued to excel throughout her secondary school years and who eventually made the jump from national to international walker. She was continuously in the medal mix in Victorian and Australian championships as this extract shows.

2008 Feb	AV U20 5000m track	3 rd	26:18.62
2008 Feb	AV U18 5000m track	2 nd	27:46.49
2008 June	AV Schools U18 5km road	3 rd	26:28
2008 Jul	AV U18 8km road	2 nd	25:29
2008 Aug	Australian U18 8 km road	1 st	24:36
2008 Oct	Vic Schools U17 3000m	1 st	25:37.35
2008 Dec	Aust Schools U17 5000m	2 nd	25:52.83
2009 Feb	AV U20 5000m track	2 nd	23:44.54
2009 Feb	AV U18 5000m track	2 nd	24:21.37
2009 June	LBG Carnival – 10 Mile Open	8 th	1:28:30
2009 June	Vic Schools U20 10km road	1 st	52:46
2009 July	Vic Open 10km road	2 nd	50:39
2009 Aug	AV U18 8km road	1 st	24:37
2009 Oct	Vic Schools U18 5000m	1 st	25:34
2009 Dec	Aust Schools U18 5000m	1 st	25:00.70

2010 Jan	Canberra GP 5000m Open	7 th	24:36.84
2010 Feb	World Cup U20 Selection Trial	2 nd	49:03
2010 Mar	Aust U20 10000m track	3 rd	50:30.77



October 2008 – Beth battles out the Victorian Schools U17 3000m championship with Rachel Tallent

Let's take up the story in 2009 in what was Beth's first serious tilt at an Australian team vest.

It started with her walk in the Victorian U20 5000m track championship in February where she finished 2nd to Regan Lamble in a 37 sec PB time of **23:44.54**. She had just come off an Australian U20 racewalk camp at the AIS, run by AIS walks coach Brent Vallance, with all of our top junior walkers in attendance. Beth was only aged 16 at the time and the performance was an impressive one.

2009 was the World Youth Championships year and the Australian standard had been set at 24:25.00. With that walk, Beth was one of four girls in contention for the two spots, along with Rachel Tallent (VIC), Paige Hooper (SA) and Shannon Jennings (NSW).

Athletics Australia had made some unusual decisions over the years but one of the worst of them was in 2004 when they decommissioned the Australian Underage T&F Championships and replaced them with a Teams based competition (a decision that was eventually reversed in 2010). That meant there was no obvious U18 championship that could be used for a trial so A.A. announced that there would not be a trial – they would select their team based on performances done over the summer.

The one opportunity when all the girls could come together was in late March when an Australian U18 Interstate Youth Match was scheduled in Brisbane. It was not the official trial but it would be significant. All four girls had done numerous good times in their home states and in fact, Rachel and Beth were the fastest of the four.

Alas, in an unexpected result, Paige Hooper won with 23:58.19, Shannon Jennings was second with 24:02.54, Rachel Tallent was third with 25:00.47 and Beth was disqualified. Paige and Shannon were subsequently selected for the World Youth Championships, meaning that Rachel and Beth missed out.

With nothing else on offer for the year, Beth raced on the home front, recording some good 10km performances, with a best of **50:09**.

2010 was a Racewalking World Cup year and this time there was a trial, held in conjunction with the Australian Summer 20km Championships in Hobart in mid February. In fact, the selection criteria stated that the first 3 places in the trial would be automatically selected in the team provided they had achieved the performance standard of 50:00. That meant Beth had two aims – finish in under 50 minutes and finish in the first 3.

All went according to plan on this occasion, with Beth in good shape after just coming off a 3 week training camp at the AIS. She finished 2nd to Regan Lamble with a 1:06 PB time of **49.03**. The third finisher was Paige Hooper. The World Cup team was duly announced as Regan, Beth and Paige.

She followed this up with a good third place in the Australian U20 10,000m track championship in mid March, with a time of **50:30.77**. The first two places were taken by Regan Lamble and Paige Hooper, thus ensuring them the two World Junior Championship spots.

Beth's preparation over the next couple of months included a 5 day training camp at Falls Creek over Easter, followed by 2 weeks of altitude training in Albuquerque in New Mexico, before flying to Chihuahua in Mexico for her World Cup appearance. It was all pretty heady stuff for a Year 11 student.

She explained her training, which was relatively light compared to other girls of that standard:

A usual week will consist of a speed session with Simon on a Wednesday, a hill or a long walk (sometimes with Jess Rothwell) on a Saturday and a shorter but faster walk on a Sunday about 9-12k. On the other days I will either run, swim and I do gym once to twice a week. I usually have one day off.

Beth did not have long to wait before her World Cup race on 16th May 2010. In sweltering conditions, she crossed the line in an impressive 12th place with **50:56**. As an added bonus, she was the first of the Australian girls to finish.



Regan Lamble and Beth (both girls far left) in the 2010 Racewalking World Cup U20 10km in Chihuahua

Beth continued to walk on the home front for the rest of the 2010 winter season, culminating with wins in the Victorian U20 10km championship (**49:05**) and a win in the Australian U20 10km roadwalk championship (**50:29**) in August.

Her consistent form continued on into the summer, with a win in the Fawcner Park U20 10km in December (**50:46**) and 2nd in the U20 10km walk (**49:48**) at the Australian Summer 20km Championship meet in Hobart in February. But by March 2011, she was struggling with a painful foot issue and could only struggle to third place in the Australian U20 10,000m track championship in Sydney, with a slow **53:24.52**, behind Rachel Tallent and Paige Hooper.

This coincided with her final year of secondary schooling, so from that point on, walking took a back seat to study. Her racing stats over the next couple of years show fewer races, less finishes and more DNFs as other things took on more importance in her life.



Beth chasing Kelly Ruddick in the 2013 Victorian 5000m track championship

Her last race was at the annual LBG Carnival in Canberra in June 2014, when she finished 7th in the 10 Miles walk with 1:27:22. She then decided to retire.

When I asked her recently for an update to this chapter, she replied

I can understand that you may think I have retired from the sport, but I have actually been at fashion school for the last three years and have been taking a bit of a sabbatical. I am keeping up my fitness and by the end of the year, I hope to transition back into the sport and compete by next year.

From my perspective, that is a great response, and I look forward to seeing Beth back in action in the not too distant future.