

Bill Dyer

1981	Racewalking World Cup	Valencia	20 km	29 th	1:32:52
1983	Racewalking World Cup	Bergen	50 km	DQ	
1985	Racewalking World Cup	Isle of Man	50 km	DQ	
1991	Racewalking World Cup	San Jose	50 km	DQ	

Bill Dyer, born 26th March 1961, came through the ranks from Little Athletics where he was coached by Alan Johnson.

He has the fantastic record as the youngest person ever to become a Centurion, walking the 100 mile distance in **22:50:30** in 1977 as a 16 year old. The occasion was the 1977 24 Hour walk which VAWC had scheduled at the George Knott Athletic Field in Clifton Hill. The main starter was Claude Martin who had tried unsuccessfully in Adelaide in 1976. Claude had just completed a successful winter season of walking and was confident of success in his second attempt.

Claude started out confidently but was shadowed by the young Bill; they were never separated by more than a handful of laps. The 50 mile splits (10:32:24 for Claude and 10:42:04 for Bill) indicate this fact. The last few hours of the race proved very interesting with a strong Bill Dyer gradually closing the gap on his older opponent. Claude was, however, able to rally, just holding out the fast finishing youngster.

Bill's performance was remarkable given that he was only 16 years of age at the time. He had showed promise over long distances at an early age. The Little Athletics Association hold an annual 6 hour relay to raise money for the Melbourne Royal Childrens Hospital and Bill decided to walk it in 1975 when he was aged 14. He walked for the full 6 hours and finished with 50 km exactly. Not bad for a 14 year old doing his first 50 km!

In 1977 his coach Alan Johnson decided to have a go in the Annual Centurions Race which was being held in Melbourne. Bill went along once again for a walk with no clear expectation of how far he might go. He started at a conservative pace of 3 minutes per lap. It is history now that while Alan stopped at the 50 km mark, Bill did not. When nightfall came and Bill was still walking, he realized he was serious. As he said to me when I asked him about it: *'I realized that I wanted to become a Centurion at some stage and this seemed like the right time'*. He got one of the bystanders to ring his mother to bring down changes of clothes and some food and drink - he had nothing of this nature on hand. So with a group now supporting him, he walked through the night and on into the next day to finish in 22:50:33. Those who watched the race were astounded at Bill's maturity and how he just walked through the tough patches with determination.

Subsequent investigations confirmed that Bill was the youngest person ever in the world to have walked the 100 mile distance within 24 hours. Unfortunately the Guinness Book of Records did not have a suitable category to recognise Bill's outstanding feat and it remains one of the most under-recognized of endurance records.



Claude Martin and Bill Dyer congratulate each other on their successful centurion walks in 1977

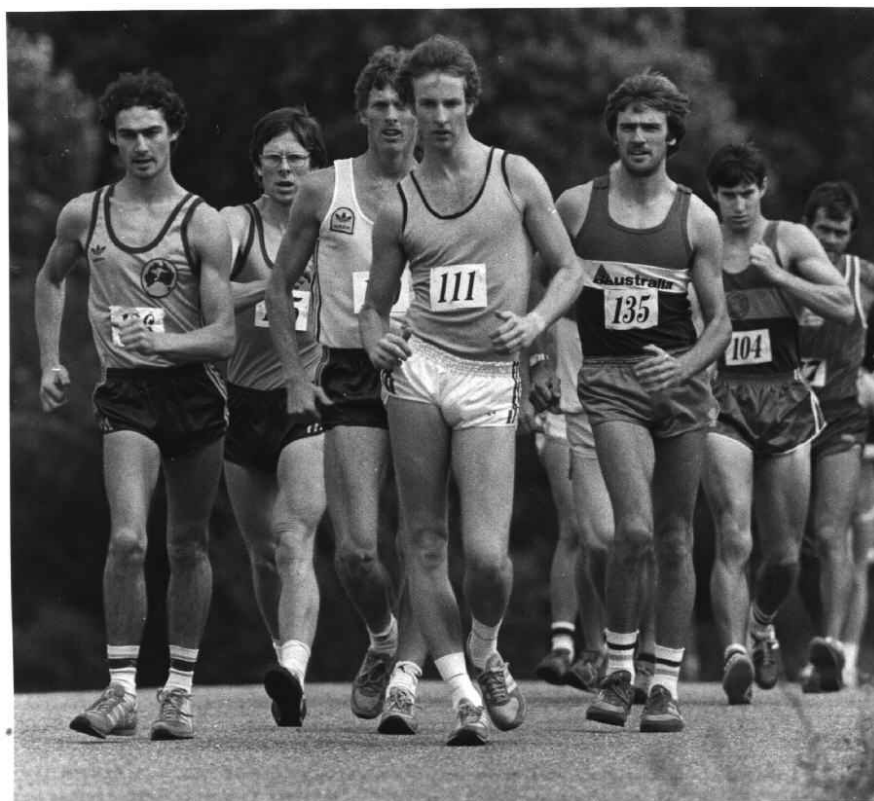
Bill did not seem to suffer any adverse effects from his centurion effort. Perhaps it was the exuberance of youth or just the fact that he was a natural born endurance athlete. He certainly liked to walk the the longer events. In 1978, he was 3rd in the Victorian 20 km title in **1:38:41** – at 17 years of age.

In 1979 at the National track nationals he was 2nd (**13:01**) to Mike Woods in the Junior title and 3rd (**12:55**) in the Open track title. Then as the winter season got under way, he fronted up for the Victorian 20 km walk and placed 2nd in **1:32:19**. On the basis of that walk, he was selected in his first interntional race, the 1979 AFRWC Australia vs New Zealand match in Auckland. Here he won the 20 km event in **1:35:05**. He was still only 18 years of age at the time.

At the National Junior track titles in Sydney in March 1980, he finished 2nd (**12:56**) to Mike Woods again.

By February 1981, he was scorching the track and came 3rd in the Victorian 3000m track title in the excellent time of **12:02.2**. He was not yet 20 years of age.

That winter he placed 3rd in the Lugano Cup 20 km trial in Adelaide in **1:32:24** and was selected for Valencia. In the oppressive heat of Spain, he was the first Australian to finish in the 20 km event with a smart **1:32:52**. From then on, he was a regular place-getter in Victorian State titles, winning bronze and silver medals at various distances from 3 km to 50 km.



Bill Dyer (135) and other Australians (Mike Harvey, Tim Erickson and Andrew Jachno) hit out in a 10 km event in England before the 1983 Racewalking World Cup event.

In 1982, he was 3rd in the Victorian 30 km race in **2:20:01**, well under the Commonwealth Games qualifying standard of 2:24:00 and 2nd in the Canberra 20 mile event in **2:36:52**. But a disappointing 5th place in the trial ended his hopes of a berth in that team. He bounced back 2 weeks later with a fine 2nd in the Federation 10 km in Richmond (**43:40**) but to no avail.

At this time, he decided that his future lay in the 50 km event and he moved up, winning the Victorian 50 km title in June in 4:31:11, then coming 3rd in the Lugano Cup trial in July 1983 in Sydney in 4:27:05. His final hitout before Bergen was a 10 km at Newmarket in England where he finished 3rd in a PB of 43:18. The subsequent disqualification in the World Championship 50 km race was a great letdown for Bill. His progression up till that point had been continuous and impressive.

In 1984, he recorded his second Victorian 50 km title win, this time in a much improved **4:11:08** but the competition was improving along with him. From then on, he had to fend with the likes of Andrew Jachno, Simon Baker, Michael

Harvey and others. Also, he was suffering more at the hands of the judges and disqualifications at crucial times kept him from making a number of teams.

He did manage to hold it all together and make the team for the 1987 Racewalking World Cup in the Isle of Man but once again he was disqualified.

The next few years saw Bill continuing to race but not at the same high standard. He was now working full time as a builder and the hard physical work meant that racewalking took a back seat to his trade.

His final successful team selection was in 1991 when he finished 2nd in the Lugano Cup 50 km trial in Melbourne in **4:15:45**. But again, success overseas eluded him and he suffered another DQ at the hands of the international judges in San Jose.

He continued racing for another couple of years, his best performance being a 3rd in the 1992 Lake Burley Griffin 20 mile (**2:43:48**) but family and work commitments along with his many racing disappointments saw him eventually retire in 1994.

His work as a builder was, in my opinion, a contributing factor to his lack of further progression. It must have been difficult to combine top intensity training with a tough physical job. Who knows what might have happened if he had chosen a different career and had been able to concentrate fully on his walking like the AIS based walkers.

Bill still does the occasional race at Albert Park but these days he competes for fitness and enjoyment.