

## DAVID SMYTH – ON THE IMPROVE

One of the big improvers at the World Masters Indoor Championships in Finland was Western Australian walker David Smyth - a big PB of 15:55.2 in the 3000m indoor track walk and then another PB of 54:54 in the 10km roadwalk. So I thought it about time I put David under the microscope and let readers know a bit more about him.

The basics first - David who is currently the President of the Racewalking Club of Western Australia, is actually a New Zealander by birth (yes, if you have ever heard him talk, you will quickly twig to that unique Kiwi accent).

David started his athletics career in New Zealand as a 400m/800m runner but couldn't seem to get past the semis in his regional school championships even though his schoolboy PBs were quite good – 55.09 for 400m and 2:01 for 800m. The big change came for him at age 15 when one night at training, his Club President said they needed an additional racewalker that weekend to qualify for the NZ Club Championships. He practiced that night, doing a 2000m walk in 13 minutes. With that one session under his belt, he raced the following weekend in the 3000m walk, coming 4<sup>th</sup> without any warnings in a time of 20:55.51.

The club duly went to the NZ Club Championships 4 weeks later where he raced to 3<sup>rd</sup> in the B division in a much improved time of 19:42. By this time, he had a coach in Mr Paul Luckie, Craig Barrett's first coach. He subsequently took bronze in the Waikato Schools Championships and was selected for the North Island Secondary Schools Champs. In the much tougher competition he came 6<sup>th</sup> with 18:52.

He was now hooked and trained through the winter. The following year he won three Waikato U18 and U20 walking titles and was selected in the Waikato team to contest the NZ championships. Unfortunately he couldn't go due to work commitments.

He carried on with his walking until he was 21 years of age, hanging up his racing shoes when he fell in love! It was not until some 7 years later that he returned to the sport, rejoined his same club and started to train and race again.

*I raced ok but was not as fast as previously. I went to the NZ Interclub Championships again but came last in 16:09. I remember Scott Nelson winning the race in around 11:45.*

His move from Hamilton to Wellington was a good one and his walking started to improve once again. His senior highlight was taking 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 2002 NZ 20km Championship.

When his father died, David was grief stricken – he had lost not only his father but his coach and best friend. Presumably his walking suffered too as, when he moved to Sydney in 2005, he was an overweight 109kg! He joined NSW Race Walking Club in May of that year, stripped down to a still big 95kg and started racing once again. He approached Marilyn Pearson to coach him and she took up the challenge.

*She is and always will be an amazing lady and friend. She coached me and though her I won 6 Australian Masters M35 titles and I thank her even now. I still love my training even now at 42.*



David racing for NSW Masters in his 2006 M35 Australian Masters Championship win

He moved to Perth in 2007 to continue his career as a chef (he has worked in the trade since age 19) and he currently works in his dream job with Herdsman ([www.theherdsman.com.au](http://www.theherdsman.com.au)) as a dessert chef. He joined the Racewalking Club of Western Australia once he arrived in Perth and has won his fair share of Masters and Open medals since then. He trains 6 days per week but is forced, due to his working hours, to do much of his training alone.

He went to his first World Masters Championships in Sacramento in July 2011 and won team gold along with Stuart Kollmorgen and James Christmass in the 20km walk.



**David, Stuart and James at the 2011 World Masters Championships in Sacramento**

He came back inspired to train more. He has now teamed up with coach Jim Leppik (<http://www.jamesfitness.info/>) and has been preparing for Finland in earnest.

*I am now training hard for the World Masters Indoor Champs in Jyväskylä Finland which I'm so excited about and very nervous as it will be my first indoor track race but my good friend Marie Kay says its an amazing experience. After that, my next aims are to do the NZ 50km champs and break the WA record of 5:29:12.*

Since I last saw David at the 2011 Australian 20km championships in Canberra in August last year, he has shed 10kg and is now a trim 73kg. His results in Finland lived up to his expectations - a big PB of 15:55.2 in the 3000m indoor track walk and then another PB of 54:54 in the 10km roadwalk.



**April 2012 – a trim 73kg when racing in Finland**

My final question to David – what's his secret?

*I put my current form down to training at 100%, completely following the coach's programme and proper eating. I*

*love living in Australia not only because of the weather the because of the food and the wider racewalking community which is like one huge family.*

Well done David on a career in progress. May the improvement continue and the PBs come thick and fast!