

*Duane Cousins**1995-2007*

1995	Racewalking World Cup	Beijing	50 km	71 st	4:31:28
1996	Olympic Games	Atlanta	50 km	DNF	
1997	Racewalking World Cup	Prague	50 km	45 th	4:07:17
1998	Commonwealth Games	Kuala Lumpur	50 km	2 nd	4:10:30
1999	Racewalking World Cup	Mezidon	50 km	46 th	4:02:27
2000	Olympic Games	Sydney	50 km	34 th	4:10:43
2002	Commonwealth Games	Manchester	50 km	4 th	4:09:54
2002	Racewalking World Cup	Turin	50 km	37 th	4:12:19
2004	Racewalking World Cup	Naumburg	50 km	26 th	4:09:14
2006	Commonwealth Games	Melbourne	50 km	DQ	
2006	Racewalking World Cup	La Coruna	20 km	51 st	1:27:08
2007	IAAF World Champs	Osaka	50 km	DQ	

Duane Cousins, born 13th July 1973, stands 178cm, races at 65 kg and hails from a hometown base of Bendigo. He started in Little Athletics when 6 years old but didn't start to concentrate on walks until 1988 after watching Simon Baker finish 6th at the Olympics (at the time he was recovering from a knee injury from running).



Duane in his junior days 1991 at Olympic Park in Melbourne.

He first came to prominence at a National level in July 1991 in Brisbane when he won the Australian All Schools Under 19 10 km road walk in **46:55**. He followed this up in March 1992 with 2nd place in the Australian Junior 5000m track title in a time of **22:04**. This put him in contention for the World Junior team but he suffered a disqualification in the 10000m track walk trial so missed out on selection. He bounced back in June at the LBG Under 20 10 km roadwalk when he finished 2nd to Dion Russell in **45:11** and then finished 2nd again to Dion in August in the Australian Junior 10 km title in an even faster **44:47**.

As a junior, he showed a preference for the longer distances and set new Australian and Victorian Junior records for the 20000m track walk (**1:34:06**) and the 2 Hour Track Walk (**25,279.20m**). But overall, he was forced repeatedly into 2nd place in the major races behind Dion who dominated the junior tanks during this period. Duane was 2nd in the Australian Junior 20 km roadwalk title for 3 years in succession, from 1991 to 1993.

Duane attempted his first 50 km race in December 1994 at only 21 years of age. His time was a great first up **4:12:36** and gained him him a place in the Racewalking World Cup team. In Beijing the following May, he came 71st in **4:31:28**. He then placed 2nd in the Canberra 20 mile event in **2:29:24**, won his first National Open title, the Australian 50 km, in Adelaide in **4:15:20** in convincing style and then won the AFRWC 20 km title in Melbourne in **1:29:10**. To cap the year off, he won a VRWC 50 km walk in Melbourne in an astonishing **3:54:38**. This ranked him number 1 Australian and 3rd in the Commonwealth. Duane had seemingly come from nowhere to produce a world ranking 50 km

performance. 1995 had certainly been a breakthrough year.

He was immediately offered an AIS scholarship and relocated to Canberra in early 1996. He continued on his merry way with further great performances. He won the AV 50 km championship in Melbourne in **3:56:17**. This was the Olympic trial so gained him an Olympic berth. June saw him repeat his 2nd place in the Canberra 20 Mile with an improved **2:24:24**. Then he won his second National title, the Australian 30 km, in Sydney.

His Olympic walk in Atlanta is remembered in unique circumstances. He was credited as a DNF in the 50 km event after being told by a course marshall to return to the stadium when he still had 1 lap to do. It was a great disappointment for Duane.

Still, life goes on and an AIS scholarship holder is expected to produce the goods on a yearly basis. So 1997 saw Duane back into racing mode. In February he came 3rd in the Australian 20 km road walk in **1:25:17**. Then it was off to Europe in April where he finished 45th in **4:07:17** in the Racewalking World Cup in Prague. Then back to Australia where, in September, he retained his Australian 30 km title in Sydney with a time of **2:18:20**. Then in December, he came 2nd to Dion Russell in the Australian 50 km title in Melbourne. His time of **3:57:40** was yet another sub 4 hour performance and gave him an A qualifier for the forthcoming Commonwealth Games.

With his Commonwealth Games berth assured, he threw himself into a full season of racing. In March 1998, he came 5th in the Australian 5000m track title in a fast **20:33**. Then shortly after, he finished 3rd in the Australian 20 km championship in Melbourne in **1:28:22**. Then it was off to Europe where he did a series of races. His final hitout before Kuala Lumpur was the Victorian 30 km championship which he won in a PB time of **2:09:34**.

In the 50 km walk at Kuala Lumpur, he walked a very well judged race in the atrocious conditions. He stormed home for 2nd place in **4:10:30**, just failing to catch the winner by a mere 25 seconds.

Back from Malaysia, he returned to Canberra and returned to training mode. His next major appearance was in the Australian 20 km road walk title in March 1999 when he finished 5th in **1:24:50**. Then in a surprise move, he left the AIS at Easter 1999 to return to his Victorian country home of Bendigo. This was a hard decision – he would be leaving the competitive Canberra environment and working on his own from then on.



Duane walks to second place in the 1998 Commonwealth Games 50 km in Kuala Lumpur in hot oppressive conditions.

Immediately he was off to Mezdion in France where he competed in the 50 km event at the Racewalking World Cup. He finished 46th in the good time of **4:02:27**. Back in Australia, he won the Australian 30 km championship at Albert

Park in September with a time of **2:18:22**.

After a further training period, Duane emerged to finish 3rd in the 50 km Australian Championship and Olympic Games Trial which was held in Melbourne in December 1999. His time was a fine **3:59:34** and gained him Olympic selection. Then onto the 20 km Australian Championship and Olympic trial in March 2000 when he finished 4th in **1:24:20**.

Duane's last local hitout before the Sydney Olympics was the Victorian 30 km title which he won in **2:16:17**. His Olympic walk in Sydney was possibly disappointing. Before a home crowd, he could only manage 34th and a slow (by his high standards) time of **4:10:43**. Certainly the day had been very hot and sunny but others had managed to hold together better than him.

His next hitout was in April 2001 when he finished 3rd in the Australian 20 km title in Brisbane in **1:31:17**. Then a month later, he finished 3rd once again in the Australian 50 km title race in Melbourne in a fast **3:59:25**. This was the qualifying race for the IAAF World Championships but his time ranked him 4th amongst the Australian walkers and he narrowly missed out on selection.

After an otherwise quiet winter season, he came out looking fit for the summer and raced a full season of Interclub in Melbourne. He showed his fitness with a good win in the 2002 Victorian 5000m track title in March in **21:07**. He then followed this up with a fine 2nd in the Australian 50 km title in Melbourne in May. His time of **3:59:27** was yet another sub 4 hour performance and gained him selection in both the Commonwealth Games and the Racewalking World Cup teams.

Returning to Bendigo to train, he did not race again until the Manchester Commonwealth Games walk in late July. In a slow race, he was a creditable 4th in **4:09:54**. He then followed this up with a good 37th with **4:12:19** in the Racewalking World Cup in Turin in October.

After yet another quiet summer, Duane stepped out for the 2003 Australian 50 km championship, held at Albert Park in mid May. In wet cold conditions, he produced yet another sub 4 hour performance and claimed yet another Australian Title. The time of **3:59:33** was his 7th time under the 4 hour barrier.

This was Duane's only serious race for the winter. The next time he faced the starter's gun was in December 2003 when the 2004 Racewalking World Cup 50 km trial was held at Albert Park. On this occasion, Duane walked conservatively to take 3rd place in **4:09:43** and secure yet another Australian vest. Slick 20 km times of **1:30:58** (Canberra A Series meet in January) and **1:31:54** (7th place in the National title in Sydney in February) showed that he had recovered well from his December effort.

Duane's 2004 Racewalking World Cup was yet another consistent performance - 26th in **4:09:14** - and he also fulfilled the role of Team Captain.

The question now arose - would we see Duane in further races or did this mark the end of the road? The answer was not long in coming. Following a stint with the AIS walkers at Threadbo in late 2004, Duane produced a very impressive **1:27:51** to finish 4th in the Canberra A Series roadwalk in early February 2005. It was his fastest 20 km walk since 1999 and announced his intentions in no uncertain terms. He did not want to retire on a low note and it was time for another sub 4 hour 50 km performance. He backed up the next month with a consistent **1:28:06** to come 6th in the National 20 km championship in Sydney.

His third place in the Australian 2005 50 km championship in May showed that his training was still on track. His time of **4:04:35** was his best for 2 years and gained him a third Commonwealth Games berth.

He trained hard during the winter at his home base in Bendigo, only making a few appearances. He was 4th in the Canberra 20 mile in **2:37:20** and 3rd in the Victorian 20 km (**1:30:42**) and Victorian 30 km (**2:21:45**) but did not contest the National 30 km title. His only other race of significance during this period was the 50 km qualifying race at Albert Park in October which he won in **4:13:31**.

But come the summer and his times showed great improvement as the hard training started to produce the required results. He was 6th in the Ron Clarke Classic 5000m in Geelong in December in **21:05:31**, 5th in the National 20 km in Sydney in February in **1:27:54** and 3rd in the Victorian 5000m title in a PB time of **20:30:27**. His final race before the Commonwealth Games saw him take 5th in an A Series 5000m in Melbourne with a big PB time of **20:08:22**.

He was finally ready for another big 50 km walk and it all looked to have come together as he strode towards the 46 km mark in the Commonwealth Games 50 km clearly in 2nd place and looking at a time around 3:57. It was a huge personal blow when he was disqualified. It is to his great credit that he bounced back 7 weeks later to record **1:27:08** in the World Race Walking Club 20 km competition, his best time since 1999.

Back in Australia, he was a surprise starter in the annual Racewalking Australia 20 Mile event in Canberra a month later. After a spirited tussle with Jared Tallent, Duane broke away to win in **2:32:48**. It was his first win after 2 second and two third placings.

His next race was not until 5 months later when he toed the line in the Australian 50 km championship in Geelong on 2nd December 2006. He had said privately that selection for the IAAF World Championships was the only thing missing from his resume and this was his opportunity to remedy that oversight. His race was inspirational. While Nathan Deakes was on his own out in front (setting a new world record), Duane was the one setting the pace in the chasing group and, one by one, his opposition dropped. Finally the gap widened to his last protagonist, Jared Tallent, and Duane crossed the line a clear second in a PB time of **3:53:19**. His previous time of 3:54 had been set in 1995 – 11 years previously.



Duane shadows Jared Tallent as he walks towards his best ever 50 km time of 3:53:19 in Geelong

With his IAAF World Championship selection now looking assured, Duane went back into training mode, making only the occasional competitive forays. These included 7th in the Canberra A Series 30 km in January (**1:28:44**), 2nd in the Victorian 5000 track championship in February (**20:25**), 35th in the IAAF Grand Prix 20 km walk in Shenzhen in China in March (**1:26:10**) and 1st in the Victorian 15 km championship in Geelong in May (**1:06:36**).

After 3 weeks training in St Moritz with Nathan Deakes, Luke Adams and Jane Saville, he went to Osaka full of confidence. As the 50 km race progressed, Duane gradually worked his way through the field and was walking in 18th place when he was disqualified at around the 23 km mark. It was a very disappointing result for Duane who had made huge sacrifices to prepare for this event

Duane had put in too much hard work to let it go at this stage so it was no surprise to see him toe the line in the Australian 50 km Olympic Trial on 16th December 2007 at Albert Park. In a race of great depth (the first 5 finishers all broke the Olympic A standard), Duane was 4th in **3:55:57**. In any other Olympics, this time would have assured selection but on this occasion, it was not good enough. Hopefully it will see him selected in the 2008 World Cup team which will be announced in March 2008.

With this clearly on his mind, he fronted for a number of races in the early months of 2008. Firstly in January he took 3rd in the National Series 20 km roadwalk in Canberra (**1:30:44**), took 2nd in the Victorian 5000m title in **21:06.53** and then took 5th in the Australian 2008 Olympic 20 km championship in late February with **1:27:47**.

We have learnt never to underestimate Duane's fighting spirit. Working from his base in Bendigo, he continues to confound the experts and produce inspired performances. This chapter remains an unfinished work.

His PBs are impressive

5000m	20:08.22	Melbourne 2006
10 km	42:31	Canberra 2001

20 km	1:24.20.0	Melbourne 1999
30 km	2:09:35	Melbourne 1998
50km	3:53:19	Melbourne 2006