

HEATHER CARR

Heather Carr, born 13th August 1949, has been arguably Australia's greatest female Masters racewalker for more than two decades. Over many years, she has combined natural ability and an insatiable desire to improve, and together they have unquestionably contributed to a long, successful and continuous career in racewalking.

2010 is a good year to take as an example. During that year, she raced an amazing 48 times according to the RWA results website. Even more amazingly, nearly all of them were of exceptional quality. Her PBs for the year were all W60 World Records or World Bests - check this out for a series of times and then ask yourself - could your mum walk like this: 1500m 7:18.5, 2000m 9:54.9, 3000m 15:30.7, 3km 15:19, 5000m 26:29.26, 10km 53:56, 15km 1:24:48, 20km 1:56:42. Of course this was nothing new for Heather as she had at that stage been setting Masters World Records since the W40 division and some of them still stand even now as Australian records. But even by her high standard, this was an extraordinary year. Add to that the fact that she is a fine runner and competes in triathlons with some success. Is there anything she can't do?

Heather's current record tally (as of January 2015) stood at 4 World, 9 Australian and 23 Victorian records. The full list read as follows:

Australian and Victorian	W40	1500m Walk	1990	6:45
Australian and Victorian	W45	1500m Walk	1996	6:49
Victorian	W55	1500m Walk	2005	7:11.91
Australian and Victorian	W60	1500m Walk	2010	7:18.50
Victorian	W50	1 Mile Walk	2003	7:58.4
Victorian	W45	2000m Walk	1998	9:35.5
Australian	W55	2000m Walk	2006	9:57.5
Australian and Victorian	W60	2000m Walk	2010	9:54.9
Australian and Victorian	W65	2000m Walk	2014	11:00.52
Victorian	W55	3000m Walk	2005	15:08.4
World, Australian and Victorian	W60	3000m Walk	2011	15:54.75
Victorian	W45	5000m Walk	1994	25:04.5
Victorian	W55	5000m Walk	2007	25:54.11
World, Australian and Victorian	W60	5000m Walk	2011	26:10.22
Victorian	W45	10 km Walk	1995	50:35
Victorian	W55	10 km Walk	2007	53:41.1
World, Australian and Victorian	W60	10 km Walk	2010	53:56.6
Victorian	W55	15 km Walk	2009	1:27:31
Victorian	W60	15 km Walk	2010	1:24:48
Victorian	W35	20 km Walk	1988	1:52:12
Victorian	W40	20 km Walk	1993	1:42:22
Victorian	W55	20 km Walk	2006	1:54:17
World, Australian and Victorian	W60	20 km Walk	2011	1:56:18

Of course, some of the older times in the list were World Records when she did them – for example, her 10 km time of **49:37** (W40) and her 20 km time of **1:42:22** (W40). As an aside, she had set many more records than this but she has lost many of her W40, W45, W50 and W55 records to Lyn Ventris and Pam Tindal and more recently to Kelly Ruddick, all fantastic masters walkers in their own rights.

Heather started racewalking in 1987 but only because her children were involved in Little Athletics. It was when she went to a Little Athletics camp as a camp mother that she was introduced to the event and decided to give it a go. Within one year, she had her first record, over 20 km, in the W35 division.

Heather's first coach was Frank McGuire and she remembers her time with Frank and his group with great fondness. From there, she spent some time with Harry Summers and was one of a number of promising walkers to travel to Europe on two occasions (1990 and 1991) as part of the 'Eight Nations Trips' that Harry organized. It was in Grasso in Italy on the 1990 trip that she recorded her PB 10 km walk time of 49:37.

Heather had the ability to succeed internationally in the Open division but the pressures of a young family of four children (Olivia, Lachlan, Kenna and Ewan) made that next step up the competitive rung just too hard an ask. But it is a testament to her durability and dedication that she could single-handedly raise four children, hold down a full-time position as a teacher and continue to dominate the masters world racewalking scene throughout most of the nineties.

During the early nineties she swapped to Charlie Gorman as coach and, under his guidance, she entered what she describes as the best form of her life. With a diet of intensive track work at the Ringwood venue, she was unbeatable on the World Masters scene and won triple Golds at 3 successive World Veterans Championships (1993, 1995 and 1997). From the late nineties onwards, she turned to Mark Donahoo for advise and coaching. Simon Baker has been assisting and supporting her over the past year or so. She comments

Simon has a group that I attend on Wednesday evenings at Proclamation Park in Ringwood, and Jells Park on Sunday mornings. Being part of this group has certainly motivated and encouraged me to strive to improve my existing times. It's very challenging training with the youth of Victorian racewalking. The potential I see around me is exciting and thrilling to the degree that I am looking forward with great interest in watching the rise and growth of these capable and promising juniors over the next few years.

Heather met and married former UK soccer player (and top Masters sprinter) Bill Carr in 1999. Bill and Heather currently live in Dromana, competing regularly at Tootgarook & Frankston venues and are regulars at the Victorian Race Walking Club. Heather herself is a VRWC committee member and has been a regular winner of our VRWC Runners World award for the top club walker in the Open Women's division.



**Left: Heather on the way to silver in the W40 division in the 1991 World Masters Games in Turku
Centre: Heather on her way to a W55 10 km record time of 53:41 at Albert Park in July 2007
Right: Fast forward to 2010 and still setting records in the W60 division**

Her performances at the various World Masters championships are amazing - a total of 37 individual gold medals, 7 silver medals and 1 bronze medal overall, and medals in all but one (2018) of her 23 appearances at World Masters Championships.

1987	Melbourne, Australia	Silver (5000m), Gold (10 km) and Gold (Teams)
1989	Eugene, USA	Gold in both walks
1991	Turku, Finland	Silvers in both walks
1993	Miyazaki, Japan	Gold in both walks and in the Teams
1995	Buffalo, USA	Gold in both walks and in the Teams
1997	Durban, South Africa	Gold in both walks and in the Teams
1999	Newcastle, England	Injured. Silver in Teams only
2001	Brisbane, Australia	Gold in both walks and in the Teams
2003	Carolina, Puerto Rico	Gold in both walks and silver in the Teams
2005	San Sebastian, Spain	Gold in both walks
2007	Riccione, Italy	Silvers in both walks
2009	Lahti, Finland	Silvers in both walks
2010	Kamloops, Canada (indoors)	Gold in both walks
2011	Sacramento, USA	Gold in all 3 walks
2012	Jyvasyla, Finland (indoors)	Gold in both walks
2013	Porto Alegre, Brazil	Gold in all 3 walks
2014	Budapest, Hungary (indoors)	Gold in both walks
2015	Lyon, France	Gold in all 3 walks

2016	Perth, Australia	Gold in all 3 walks
2017	Daegu, Sth Korea (indoors)	Gold in both walks
2018	Malaga, Spain	DNF in 5000m walk (injured)
2019	Torun, Poland (indoors)	Gold in 3000m and bronze in 10km
2023	Torun, Poland (indoors)	Gold in 3000m

She also had the honour of being Australian team flag bearer at the 1997 (Durban) and 2013 (Porto Allegre) World Veterans championships.

She has of course dominated the Australian and Oceania Masters championships for just as long, rarely if ever losing a race, and amassing an almost unbelievable competitive record.

In 2015, she was inducted into the Australian Masters Athletics Hall of Fame, a recognition well deserved.

All her children have now grown up and all have moved on from athletics to other activities but Heather still competes with great enthusiasm and enjoyment - not for the medals nor for the accolades but because she enjoys competing and enjoys racewalking.

In mid 2023 AMA Secretary Judy Farrell sent me an updated list of Heather's many achievements. The list is astonishing.

COMMITTEES:

Victorian Racewalking Club	Current serving committee member since 1990
Southern Peninsula Masters Athletics	Secretary from 1998 – 2021
Victorian Masters Athletics	Committee Member 2002 – 2004
World Masters Athletics Woman's Committee	Oceania Representative since 2018
Glenhuntly Athletics Club	Club Member for many years

AWARDS:

Australian Masters Athletics	Walks Athlete of the Year 2009, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020
Australian Masters Athletics	2010 Most Outstanding Female Athlete of the Year
Australian Masters Athletics	2015 Hall of Fame inductee
Victorian Racewalkers Club	2017 Life Member
World Masters Athletics	2019 (Walks Category) Athlete of the year
One of 16 Nominees	2021 World Masters Athletics - Athlete of the decade

HONOURS:

Australian Flag Bearer at WMA Championships	1997 Durban South Africa and 2013 Porto Alegre Brazil
2008 Racewalking Trophy named in her Honour	The Heather Carr Trophy is awarded each year to the winner of the VRWC Masters Women's 10 km walk held during the Summer Season

RECORDS:

Outdoor World Records	20 (1987 -2023) – Holds 2 currently
Indoor World and Australian Records	Holds 2 currently
Australian Masters Championship Records	Holds 8 currently
Australian Records	26 (1987 – 2023) Holds 12 currently
Victorian Records	22 (1987 – 2023) Holds 22 currently

TITLES and MEDALS: 1987 – 2022

Open – 1990	2010 1 Gold, 6 Silver, 12 Bronze
WMA – 1987	2022 37 Gold, 4 Silver, 1 Bronze
OMA – 2002	2019 22 Gold, 3 Team Gold
AMA – 1987	2023 47 Gold 7 Silver VMA - 1987 – 2022 49 Gold

Tim Erickson
25th October 2023

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WMA WORLD WALKER OF THE YEAR FOR 2019

The World Masters Association announced the 2019 WMA Best Athletes list on Friday 31st January 2020 and **Heather Carr** was amongst the recipients, being judged the Female Walker of the Year. I reproduce her interview from <https://world-masters-athletics.com/news/2019-athletes-of-the-year/>.

Heather Carr (W70), AUS – Women's #1 Race Walks



What does winning the award mean to you? Nomination for this award has been quite overwhelming for me. As part of the racewalking community I feel exceptionally privileged to be recognised for my contribution to the sport since beginning my involvement in athletics over 33 years ago. My interest began prior to the World Veterans Athletic Championships held in Melbourne, Australia 1987.

Athletics have played an integral part in my life, particularly having the amazing opportunity to belong to the Victorian Race Walking Club [VRWC] and Athletics Victoria [AV]. Both organizations provide wonderful support and assistance for me in pursuing my passion for athletics – predominantly racewalking. Walkers enjoy regular competitions throughout the year – so plenty of opportunities exist to improve speed, technique and endurance under race conditions. I believe Victorian racewalkers are extremely fortunate in belonging to the best club in the world!

What were your goals in Masters Athletics for 2019? My goals during 2019 were primarily to recover from an achilles injury which sidelined me during the World Championships in Malaga, Spain in 2018. Being unable to compete was absolutely distressing for me so I was resolute in my determination to devote time for recuperating and recovering from the achilles as well as from hip replacement surgery [June 2017]. With the help from an amazing Physiotherapist, I was able to build up and maintain fitness once more.

What are your goals in Masters Athletics for 2020? My goals for 2020 are to continue racewalking, and hopefully continue to enjoy good health and good company with fellow athletes. Coffee time is always paramount following a training session or competition! So, competing, keeping fit and having a fun time are very important to me!

Other than Masters Athletics, what else do you do for fun? I really enjoy and value any physical activity; attending weekly Masters local venues including Glen Eira, Frankston and Southern Peninsula. I also participate in Parkrun and compete in Triathlons. To balance this physical activity, I love reading, going to movies and spending time with family.