

## Jemima Montag 2014-2018

2014	IAAF Race Walking World Cup	Taicang	U20 10km	12 <sup>th</sup>	47:34
2015	IAAF World Youth Championships	Cali	U18 5,000m	11 <sup>th</sup>	23:46.6
2018	Commonwealth Games	Gold Coast	20km	1 <sup>st</sup>	1:32:50
2018	IAAF Race Walking World Cup	Taicang	20km	DQ	

Jemima Montag, born 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 1998 in Melbourne, became involved in Track & Field via Little Athletics, joining the Brighton LA Centre as an Under 8 age athlete. Her mother had been a 400m hurdler and her father had a passion for cricket and footy, so they thought she might enjoy it.

Jemima quickly learnt that throwing, jumping and sprinting were not for her, but the longer distance racewalking and running events were far more enjoyable. She found herself a coach and a pair of running shoes and started her progression up through the age groups.

She had to wait a year before she could compete in her first racewalk championship and by then she was already showing her talent. In March 2007, she won the Victorian Little Athletics U9 1100m walk championship with **5:59.77**. Twelve months later, in March 2008, she won the U10 1100m championship in a faster **5:46.27**.

She joined the Victorian Race Walking Club in April 2008 and experienced her first road walks, competing in the U10 and U12 races. Her very first roadwalk saw her walk **12:09** for the 2km distance. By the end of her first winter season, she had reduced that time to **11:09** and won bronze in the RWA U12 2km Championship, held in conjunction with the Australian Roadwalk Championships in August 2008.



*10 year old Jemima in her first roadwalking season in 2008*

She won her third Little Athletics title in a row in March 2009, walking the U11 1500m track distance in **7:55.07**.

In 2010, Jemima joined the Maccabi Athletics Club and extended her repertoire to include Athletics Victoria competitions. While her summer season was nothing spectacular, she did win her fourth Victorian Little Athletics title, walking **6:56.16** in the U12 1500m track walk.

As an aside, Maccabi Australia has been a key aspect of life for Jemima's family. On a positive note, her parents Ray and Amanda met for the first time on a plane returning from 1993 Maccabiah Games. On a negative note, both Ray and Amanda were present at the 1997 Maccabiah Games (Amanda was pregnant with Jemima at the time) at the infamous bridge collapse but thankfully both emerged unscathed.

She walked her first full winter season in 2010 and improved her 3km time to **14:41**. The highlight of the winter was her win in the LBG Carnival U14 2km with a time of **9:41**.



*2010 saw Jemima walk her first full winter season, with immediate success*

The 2010/2011 summer saw her hard work starting to pay dividends. In November 2010, she broke the Victorian U13 3000m walk record with a time of **14:35.20** in the Victorian Schools Championships. She followed this up with a win in the Australian Schools U14 3000m in Melbourne (**14:59.56**).

In early 2011, she won golds in the the Victorian U14 3000m track championship (**15:14.86**) and in the Australian U14 3000m track championship (**14:45.16**). She finished her summer season with yet another win, her fifth in a row, in the Little Athletics Victoria U13 1500m walk championship, her time of **6:44.36** taking some 9 secs off the Victorian LA Best Performance.

At this stage, Jemima officially joined Simon Baker's training squad. Up till this time, she had joined his squad each year for a few sessions just before the State Little Athletics Championships but now it was time to commit fully.

Winter 2011 saw another strong series of walks. Jemima won the LBG Carnival U14 2km with **9:27**, won the Victorian U14 3km with **14:17** (this was an adjusted time after a realisation that a turn had been put in the wrong place and that the lap was consequently short), won the Australian U14 3km championship with **16:17** (a very tough course in Canberra) and walked her first 10km, recording **53:18**, although only aged 13. She was now unbeatable in her age group.

The 2011/2012 summer saw more golds and more records. She scored a repeat win in the Australian Schools U14 3000m (**14:25.0**) and followed up with a win in the Athletics Australia invitational U18 5km at Fawkner Park in a PB **24:51**. The Australian Schools win was significant as it was the first time that she had raced against Queenslander Clara Smith. On that occasion, Clara was second, 13 seconds behind Jemima. They would have many battles over the next few years, swapping wins on a regular basis.

In early February, Jemima powered through a VRWC 3000m track walk at Clifton Hill in **14:07.83**, setting new Victorian U14 and U15 records. Two weeks earlier, she had walked **14:04** in an AV Shield competition but the required three watches were not in place. Just over a week after her record breaking performance, when competing in the Sydney Track Classic 5000m track walk, she recorded a 52 second PB time of **23:59.53**, bettering Regan Lamble's Victorian U16 record.

She finished her summer with wins in the Victorian U15 3000m championship (**14:30.59**), the Australian U15 3000m championship (**14:17.75**) and the Little Athletics Victoria U14 1500m championship (**6:49.74**).

Jemima's first official Australian records were set in May 2012, when she walked 5km in **24:23** at Middle Park. Her time broke the Australian U18 and U16 5km roadwalk records. Yet she was still only 14 years of age. She followed this up with a win in the LBG U16 3km in Canberra with **14:10**.

Such a winning streak could not continue forever, and Jemima eventually suffered a loss of sorts in the Australian U16 5km Roadwalk Championship in Adelaide in August 2012. She had surged to a big lead with fellow Victorian Zoe

Boldiston. The two girls had looked set for a great battle when, at the half way mark, Jemima lost contact, withdrawing soon after.

The 2012/2013 summer was a frustrating time for Jemima and Clara Smith. Both girls had been born in 1998 (Jemima in February and Clara in March) and were challenging the top U18 girls. But they were both too young for the 2013 World Youth Championships. An example of the quality of their walking was their battle in the Australian Schools U16 3000m Championship in Hobart in December 2012. Jemima led the field through the 1500m mark in a fast 6:38, with Clara close behind. The positions remained unchanged until the last lap when Clara stormed past to take the gold with a blistering finish. Clara (13:22.87), Jemima (**13:38.63**) and Katya Martin (14:13.53) all bettered the existing meet record. Jemima's time of 13:38.63 broke her own Victorian U15 3000m record by 21 secs. Clara's time was a new Queensland record.

Jemima's summer season finished on a high in February 2013. Competing in an AV Shield 1500m walk at Casey Fields, she stormed through to finish in a time of **6:31.7**, bettering the Victorian U15 and U16 records of 6:32.6 set by Anne Miller in 1978.

In a normal year, she would now have prepared for the National T&F Titles and her Victorian Little Athletics State Championship walk (this was her U15 year and she had won every age group up till then). But she was required to spend a school term at the Wesley College campus in Clunes at some stage during Year 9 so she chose the first term, now disappearing for the next 3 months.

Following on from her school camp, she and her family were due to travel to Israel in July to compete in the 19<sup>th</sup> Maccabiah Games. Because there were no walking events at Maccabiah, Jemima swapped to running mode, disappearing from the walking scene for the winter.

*I competed in the 1500m and 3000m track races. I placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 1500m in a time of 4:58 and dropped back to 5<sup>th</sup> in the 3000m the following day, quite fatigued from the previous night's efforts. On the final night of competition I also competed in the 4x400m relay for fun, and we won the silver medal behind Israel, a very strong team.*

She returned to Melbourne in August 2013 and rejoined Simon Baker's walking squad.

She very quickly showed that the season off had been a good move. Her first walk for the 2013/2014 summer saw her record a 5000m PB of **23:42** at Mentone. In her next race 4 weeks later, she won the Victorian All Schools U16 3000m championship with **13:13.32**, smashing her own Victorian record by 25 seconds. She now held the Victorian 3000m records for four consecutive age groups

Vic. U13	3000m Track Walk	14.35.20	06/11/2010	Olympic Park
Vic. U14	3000m Track Walk	14.07.83	08/02/2012	Clifton Hill
Vic. U15	3000m Track Walk	13.38.63	02/12/2012	Hobart
Vic. U16	3000m Track Walk	13.13.32	27/10/2013	Albert Park

The momentum continued with times of **22:55** (5km road walk) and **8:37.8** (2000m track walk).

Jemima turned the tables on Clara in the Australian Schools U16 3000m Championship in December in Townsville, winning with a meet record time of **13:14.42**. A week later, she finished second to Tayla-Paige Billington in the Fawkner Park invitation U20 10km in another PB of **49:22**.

These performances were but an appetiser to the main course which took place in early February 2014 in the Athletics Australia U20 10km World Cup Trial in Hobart. 15 year old Jemima went straight to the lead, passing through the 5km mark in just over 22 mins for a big 5km PB and hanging on well for a winning time of **47:00**. It was a shame that she was too young for the 2014 World Junior Champs but she was eligible to contest the World Cup and was an automatic selection as winner of the trial.

Her dominance continued at the Australian T&F Championships the next month, with wins in the U17 5000m (**22:43.54**) and in the U20 10,000m (**48:25.18**). She was, at 15 years of age, clearly now the top U20 walker in Australia.

Her May 2014 World Cup walk in Taicang, China, was a good one, finishing 12<sup>th</sup> with **47:34**, but on this occasion she had to lower her colours to Clara Smith who finished 8<sup>th</sup> with 46:33. Together, the two girls won the teams bronze for Australia behind China and Spain.



*Jemima and Clara Smith in action in the 2014 World Race Walking Cup*

Jemima did not race again for the rest of the winter

*I had a minor injury to my glute medius which occurred from an overly 'strong' massage just weeks before heading to China. I was able to make it through the race, but had to have lots of taping, icing, heating and careful loading in the days prior to the race. Afterwards, I was advised to let my hip recover fully, as the lead up to this debut international competition was the most I'd ever trained.*

When she came back for the 2014/2015 summer, she was definitely a rung lower on the fitness ladder. She was well behind Clara in the Australian Schools U18 5000m in December (**23:58.88**) but slowly clawed her way back towards her previous form with gold in the Victorian U18 5000m championship (**23:31.28**) and silver in the Victorian Open 5000m championship (**23:06.80**).

All she had to do was finish in the first two in the Australian U18 5000m Championship in March 2015 to cement a spot in the 2015 World Youth Championships team and this she did, but not in the fashion that she had planned.

*The nerves were high which took its toll on my sleep and hydration in the days prior, so during the race I began losing my awareness and weaving around the track. Afterwards, in the first aid room when I figured out what was going on, I was sure that I wouldn't be going to Colombia. I had no idea what place or time I had finished with, or how many reports I had received. It felt as if the months of hard work leading up to the championship had led to disappointment. However, I had managed to finish in second place.*

Her second place time of **24:10.16** saw her well clear of third place, but over one minute in arrears of Clara Smith.

As the winter wore on, her return to top form continued. She won the Victorian Open 10km Roadwalk Championship in May (**48:02**) and the LBG U18 5km Championship in June (**22:52**). She then joined the Australian World Youth team for a training camp in Queensland where, a week later, she surprised even herself with a huge 5000m walk time of **22:04.39** in a Brisbane T&F meet. Her winning time was over a minute ahead of Clara and catapulted her to the top of the U18 world rankings, stamping her as a serious contender for the World Youth Championships in Cali, Colombia, now only one month away.

It is pertinent at this stage to stop for a minute and discuss the great rivalry and friendship between Jemima and Clara. Jemima clarified things in July 2015:

*Clara lives in Brisbane and for the past two summers I've flown there and we've done two weeks of intensive training together. It's great to have someone of equal ability - it keeps me on my toes and makes me want to train even harder.*

Cali was a very different race to any that Jemima and Clara had encountered so far. The first half was covered slowly, then the pace increased lap by lap, with the winner covering the final 1000m in 4:12. Clara finished 7<sup>th</sup> with 23:22.4 and Jemima finished 11<sup>th</sup> with **23:46.6**, both well above their projected times. Jemima commented:

*I tripped so many times, the experience was overwhelming. You know they start off slow and that's different. We usually start off nice and just keep it steady, where this was 4.40. Prepared as you are, there is nothing you can do.*



*Jemima competes in the 2015 World Youth Championships in Cali, Colombia*

2016 was another major championship year, with the World Racewalking Team Championships in May and the World Junior Championships in July. It was also Jemima's final year at secondary school and she was doing the demanding international baccalaureate.

She won the Australian Schools U18 5000m Championship in December 2015 in Melbourne (**23:13.04**) and had a 10km qualifying time of **48:01**, done a week before in Melbourne. All she had to do was finish in the top 3 in the World Teams Championship trial in Adelaide in February, and she would have her first team spot.

Alas, it was not to be. She faded in the race, eventually finishing fourth with **49:24**. The 3 girls who finished ahead of her all bettered her 48:01 qualifying time. She was out of contention.

She did not even contest the Australian U20 10,000m Championship the following month, clearly relinquishing all chance of a berth in the World Junior Championships team. She would not race again for a further 12 months. Her school studies now took precedence for the year.

Fast forward to 2017 and Jemima was back training and racing, building up to her first 20km race. In May, she won the Victorian Open 15km Roadwalk Championship in **1:13:37**. following this up with a win in the U20 10km walk at the annual LBG Carnival in Canberra in June, with a PB **46:43**.

After a further training block that included 3 weeks altitude work in Colombia, she completed her first 20km walk at Fawkner Park in December, coming 3<sup>rd</sup> with **1:34:18** and setting a new Australian U20 record. A PB of **46:18.42** followed in the Australian 10,000m track walk championship in Canberra in January 2018.

She upped the ante considerably with her 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish in the Australian 20km Summer Championship in Adelaide 4 weeks later, with a 3 minute PB of **1:31:26**. Always near the front, she forced the pace mid race and was only 3 seconds behind winner Beki Smith at the finish. Her 10km splits of **46:15** and **45:11** meant she broke her 10km PB in the first half of the race and then went even faster in the second half.

Between her Fawkner Park and Adelaide races, she had trained in Canberra at the Supernova Study, benefiting immensely from 6 weeks of hard work. She had now clinched her first Commonwealth Games and her second World Race Walking Championships berths.

Four weeks later, Jemima won the Victorian Open 5000m Track Walk in a 32 sec PB of **21:32.68**. This was the second fastest ever time in this championship, behind Jess Rothwell's 2009 Victorian Record winning time of 21:03.33.



*Jemima walks in the Australian 10,000m walk championship in Canberra in January 2018*

She entered the Commonwealth Games 20km walk 5 weeks after this as one of 3 favourites, along with fellow Australians Beki Smith and Claire Tallent. Little separated the three women on paper and it was seemingly anyone's race. Jemima was the one who laid her cards on the table, taking an early lead in only her third walk over the distance, maintaining a strong pace throughout, and crossing for the gold medal in **1:32:50**, a mere four seconds outside Jane Saville's 2006 Games record of 1:32.46. At 20 years of age, Jemima became the youngest ever winner of a Commonwealth walk crown, crediting her composure over the final lap to coach Brent Vallance, "*I made sure to listen out for him, reminding me to stay strong over the last lap*".



*Jemima wins the 2018 Commonwealth Games 20km walk in Queensland*

A further 4 weeks to early May when Jemima had her next international appointment, with the women's 20km walk at the IAAF World Race Walking Team Championships in Taicang, China. She started confidently, staying with the lead group through half-way and was well on the way to a sub-1:30 finishing time when she was shown the red paddle towards the end of the race. It was a disappointing outcome but one from which she could take many positives.

In 2015, Jemima commented:

*The ultimate dream is the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. Walkers doesn't really have an expiry date. As long as you're interested and motivated, look after your body, you can just keep on going.*

She has certainly transitioned well to the senior ranks and is well on the path to fulfilling that dream.