

Jesse Osborne 2011-2014

2011	IAAF World Youth Championships	Lille	U18 10,000m	18 th	45:11.78
2012	IAAF Racewalking World Cup	Saransk	U20 10km	24 th	44:15
2014	IAAF Racewalking World Cup	Taicang	U20 10,000m	12 th	42:13
2014	IAAF World Junior Championships	Eugene	U20 10,000m	33 rd	49:53.38

Jesse Osborne, born 21st January 1995, was one of a group of talented young walkers to emerge in Brisbane in the early to mid 2000's. Others included Ben Tesch, Brad Aiton, Dane Bird-Smith, Nick and Brandon Dewar

His athletics career started with Strathpine Little Athletics Club, in suburban Brisbane, as an Under 6 athlete. From Under 6 through to Under 9, he enjoyed sprinting, medalling at a number of the Queensland Little Athletics Championships.

He soon found that he had a natural affinity for the longer distance events as well, and racewalking clicked into place. Under the guidance of his coach Dave Jones, he won the Queensland Little Athletics State Championship walks from the Under 10 division onwards (right through to the Under 17 division).

Jesse's first foray into national level racewalking was in the Perth based Australian Roadwalk Championships in September 2007. It was an inauspicious start, finishing 7th in the U14 3km walk with **17:27**.

What a difference a year makes, with Jesse winning the U14 3km at the 2008 Australian Roadwalk Championships in Melbourne, with a much improved **15:28**.

A further and much more significant victory followed in December 2008 when the 8th Pacific Schools Games were held alongside the Australian Schools T&F Championships in Canberra. Walk fields were big, with a grand total of 123 starters. Jesse was one of the stars, winning gold in the U14 1500m track walk with **7:04.51**.

In 2009, he realised he needed to move to a larger group training environment if he was to improve further. As David Smith's squad included a number of older and faster walkers, it seemed a good fit. He also joined Queensland Racewalking Club at this time.

The 2009 winter season saw the 14 year old Jesse start to make big inroads into his times, reducing his 3km to **13:26** and recording **24:28** for 5km. In the bottom half of the U16 age group, he took bronze in the National Roadwalk 5km U16 Championship in August (**24:33**).

He had a big double in the Australian Schools Championships in Hobart in December 2009, winning gold in the U15 3000m (**13:32.92**) and silver in the U17 5000m (**23:23.54**).



A young Jesse strides to victory in the 2009 Australian Schools Championships in Hobart

He scored an even more impressive double in March 2010 in the Australian T&F Championships in Sydney, winning golds in the U16 3000m walk (**13:30.70**) and the U17 5000m walk (**23:19.29**). He showed his speed two weeks later, winning the Little Athletics Queensland U15 1500m walk with a very fast **6:18.40**.

He walked his first 10km in May 2010, an impressive **48:11** at 15 years of age. He also recorded PBs for 1500m (**5:54.30**), 3km (**13:09**) and 5km (**23:04**) during that winter. One thing was becoming very clear – Jesse had unlimited natural speed and lots of endurance. Yet, he had to be satisfied with bronze in the 2010 Australian U16 5km Roadwalk Championship, won by Victorian Nathan Brill in a very fast 22:59. It was the first of many battles between these two equally matched walkers as they worked their way up through the junior ranks.



The 2010 Australian Schools T&F Championships – the first of many battles between Jesse and Nathan Brill

As the 2010/2011 summer progressed, Jesse further reduced his times, recording **12:27.30** for the 3000m track walk and **47:18** for the 10km roadwalk. He had his revenge on Nathan in the 2010 Australian Schools T&F Championships, winning the U16 3000m with **12:45.00**, a time which set a new Queensland U16 record. A week later, he finished third in the U20 10km invitation walk at Fawkner Park in a big PB time of **45:46**, beaten only by the older Dane Bird-Smith and Brad Aiton.

He finished off his summer in fine style with another double at the Australian T&F Championships in Sydney in March 2011, winning the U17 5000m (PB **21:29.41**) and taking third in the U20 10,000m (PB **44:45.83**), once again behind Dane Bird-Smith and Brad Aiton. This excellent double ensured he was selected, along with Brad Aiton, for the 2011 IAAF World Youth Championships in Lille, France.

Brad and Jesse prepared for the World Youth Champs with first and second places in the LBG U18 5km championship in Canberra in June 2011 (**22:02** and **22:17**). A month later, they both walked well in Lille, but Brad perhaps paid a price for going out with the leaders in the early stages. History shows that Brad finished 16th with 45:00.02 while Jesse was two places further back in **45:11.78**.

Not much separated the two walkers but Brad seemed to consistently win. He and Jesse fought out the Australian U18 5km Roadwalk Championship in Canberra in August, with the finishing positions in their usual order – Brad first with 45:48 and Jesse second with **46:07**, on a tough course.

The 2011/2012 summer saw more great times from Jesse, now aged 16. First to October when he won the Queensland Secondary Schools U18 5000m with a PB **21:05.14**, finally beating Brad after 2 years of trying. He followed this with a PB of **12:10.11** in a QA 3000m Interclub competition. He had to lower his colours to Brad in the Australian Schools Championships U18 5000m in December (21:14.65 to **21:38.48**) and then they were both beaten by the older Blake Steele in the AA Invitational 10km roadwalk at Fawkner Park a week later, although Jesse's second place time of **44:30** was still a PB.

After spending most of January 2012 at an A.A. U20 training camp at Thredbo, he returned to racing with a bang, setting a Queensland U18 3000m track walk record of **11:51.70** in a QA Interclub meet in Brisbane. A week later, he raced to a big PB of **20:23.37** in the Sydney Track Classic 5000m, beating all but the top Open Australian walkers. A

week later, he was in Hobart for the U20 10km World Racewalking Cup trial. But it didn't matter what sort of shape you were in, with a temperature of 38°C on the Saturday evening, it was a case of simply staying on your feet and trying to get through the race. And this he did, suffering through to a third place finish behind Blake Steele and Nathan Brill. His time was a slow **47:12** but it was good enough to lock in a place in the Australian team for the World Racewalking Cup in Saransk in May.

In March, Jesse walked a very impressive double in the Australian T&F Championships in Sydney, winning the U18 5000m with **21:29.99** and coming second in the U20 10,000m with **44:23.03**. The Australian World Junior qualifying standard had been set at 44:05 so there was a lot of interest in who would take the placings and what sort of times they could produce. It was a humid evening and the walkers obviously found it tough, as times were generally slower than expected. Blake Steele's winning time of 44:23.03 was outside the standard, but he had a recent time of 43:27 so was still an automatic team selection. Jesse's second place time was outside the required standard so he had missed his opportunity. The only other male walker to have qualified was Brad Aiton who had a PB of 42:51, done the previous month in Brisbane, but he had finished behind Jesse and was then informed he had been disqualified. Brad would have to wait before eventually being given the nod for the second World Juniors spot.

Two months later in Saransk, the three boys performed superbly, all doing PBs in the oppressive conditions – Blake Steele 17th with 43:15 (12 sec PB), Jesse 24th with **44:15** (15 sec PB) and Nathan Brill 32nd with 44:52 (8 sec PB). Both Nathan and Jesse would be eligible to contest this same event in 2 years time so the prospects looked bright for 2014.



Jesse walks in the 2012 IAAF World Racewalking Cup in Saransk

Jesse chose to contest the Open 10 Miles walk at the 2012 LBG Carnival the following month and walked a good second to Rhydian Cowley with **1:14:55**. Apart from that, his winter was relatively low key – he raced regularly on the Brisbane front but nothing too fast or too hard. He came second to Nathan Brill in the Australian U18 10km walk in August but in a slow **45:57**.

It was not until November that he hit his straps again, walking a PB **5:39.71** to win the Intraining Classic 1500m walk in Brisbane. He was second to Nathan in the Australian Schools U18 5000m in December (**21:46.03**) but turned the tables to win the Fawcner Park U20 10km with a PB **43:18**.

It was at this stage that he had to make a hard decision. He had been having more and more trouble on the local Brisbane front with bullying and inappropriate behaviour from certain people within the Queensland walks community. He seemed to have only 2 choices – give up walking or move interstate. He chose the former, moving to Melbourne, joining Simon Baker's training group and living initially with the Brill family before finding a more permanent accommodation. He would remain in Melbourne for the duration of his short but spectacular career.

After a training camp at Falls Creek, he surprised everyone by contesting the Open 20km race at the 2013 Australian Summer Roadwalk Championships in Hobart. His performance was a revelation - 3rd with **1:29:24**. To walk 1:29:24 at 18 years of age in your first ever attempt is pretty outstanding in my book. A week later, on 1st March 2013, he finished second to Rhydian Cowley in the Victorian Open 5000m Track Championship in a huge PB of **20:00.56**.



Jesse walks 1:29:24 for 20km in Hobart in February 2013

He was beaten by Nathan in the Sydney track Classic 5000m (Jesse's time was **21:00.5**) and in the Australian U20 10,000m Championship (Jesse's time was **43:24.41**) but the two boys were now a long way ahead of any other U20 opposition.

While Nathan was still concentrating on the shorter races, Jesse was testing himself over the longer distances. He finished second to Chris Erickson in the Victorian 15km Championship in May (**1:08:36**), won the Victorian Country 10km Roadwalk Championship a couple of weeks later (PB **42:56**) and then won the Open 10 Miles Championship in the LBG Carnival in June in a course record of **1:10:57**. Walking with Chris Erickson for the first 8 miles, he broke clear in the final couple of miles before the turn and finished strongly. The future seemed to have no limits for the 18 year old Jesse.

He finished his winter season with a win in the Australian U20 10km Roadwalk Championship in Launceston with **44:32**, and was duly invited by A.A. to contest the annual MTR Hong Kong International 10km Roadwalk in October. Unfortunately a foot injury put paid to his race and he was forced to limp home for third place and a time of **45:54**. It was really his first setback in what had been a stellar last few years.

He was soon back into top shape and pushed out some very fast track times back in Melbourne – **5:32.0** for 1500m and **7:45.5** for 2000m. His next real test was in the annual U20 10km invitational race at Fawker Park in December and he did not disappoint, winning with a PB **42:16**, with Nathan Brill second with a PB 43:43. Both boys easily bettered the 46:30 junior qualification standard for the 2014 World Race Walking Cup, putting them at the head of the selection queue.

Jesse and Nathan did not have long to wait until the official trial which was held in conjunction with the Australian Summer Roadwalk Championships in Hobart in early February 2014. Jesse strode straight to the lead and was on target for a sub-41 at the 6km mark before fading slightly in the warming morning conditions. His final time of **41:27** was a 51 sec PB and saw him finish over a minute clear of Nathan who was only 13 secs outside his PB with a fine time of 42:46. Jesse and Nathan had competed in the U20 10km in the 2012 World Cup as youngsters. Now they would compete again in 2014, but this time as much more seasoned walkers.

He walked a brilliant second place to Chris Erickson in early March in the Victorian Open 5000m Walk, his time of **19:46.23** bettering Dion Russell's 1994 Victorian U20 record of 20:01.35. It also bettered Nathan Deakes' VRWC U20 club record of 19:46.88, set in Sydney in 1996, and was so close to Troy Sundstrom's Australian U20 record of 19:38.22, set in Sydney in 2000.

Two weeks later, he fronted for the Australian U20 10,000m Championship in Sydney. It was the usual battle between Jesse and Nathan who slugged it out together for 21 of the 25 laps before Jesse slowed. The final result saw Nathan winning in 43:12.63 ahead of Jesse **43:38.63**, both times under the World Junior qualifying standard. This confirmed their spots for the 2014 World Junior Championships in Oregon. They now had the double.

Just over a week later, Jesse put in yet another extraordinary performance, this time in a VRWC 1500m track race at Dolomore Oval in Mentone. He powered around the 400m track to record a 13 second PB time of **5:19.54**. That time slotted him in at third place overall behind Dane Bird-Smith and David Smith in the all-time rankings. And he was still only 19 years of age.

Another couple of weeks and another big walk, this time in the AV Shield Final at Albert Park, where he beat Chris Erickson to win the 3000m track walk with a PB **11:19.0**.

Fast forward to May 2014 and the World Race Walking Cup in China, and the boys both performed well, Nathan 7th in a PB 41:07 and Jesse 12th in **42:13**. Their performances also won them a teams bronze medal in the U20 10km behind China and Spain. This was Australia's first ever team medal in the junior events and only our third team medal overall.



Jesse and Nathan Brill walk to a team bronze medal in the 2014 IAAF World Racewalking Cup in China

But all was not well. Jesse had been nursing a troublesome hamstring for some time now and the efforts of his last few races had aggravated it. Although getting treatment from the Athletics Australia doctor and physio, it did not respond. Although he did make it to the World Junior Championships in July, he could only limp home in 33rd place in a very disappointing **49:53.38**.

The tear was diagnosed as hamstring tendinopathy, a serious condition that can become chronic with continued use. He was advised to take 6 to 12 months off completely and then see if he could return. He packed his bags and returned home to Brisbane to recuperate.

In May 2015, he made a tentative return but the pain was still there – it had indeed become a chronic injury.

He has not raced since and I suspect he will not return again. It is in many ways a tragedy – consider his PBs below, all done before the age of 20. What could he have done if his body had held up and he could have continued.

1500m	5:19.54	Melbourne	23/03/2014	Age 19
2000m	7:38.3	Melbourne	18/01/2014	Age 18
3000m	11:19.0	Melbourne	12/04/2014	Age 19
5000m	19:46.23	Melbourne	02/03/2014	Age 19
10km	41:27	Hobart	02/02/2014	Age 19
10 miles	1:10:57	Canberra	09/06/2013	Age 18
20km	1:29:24	Hobart	24/02/2013	Age 18