

Kevin Lowden

1991	Racewalking World Cup	San Jose	50 km	NDF
------	-----------------------	----------	-------	-----

Kevin Lowden, born on 22nd May 1968, shared Junior ranks with the likes of Paul Copeland, Craig Brill, Robbie McFadden, Nick A'Hern, Kenny Miller, Mark Payne and Stephen Stringer. But he was able to match it on many occasions and was a very talented young walker in his own right.

He placed in Victorian underage championships between 1980 (when he was still under 12) and 1988. In that time he won 8 State titles, culminating in the Victorian Junior 20 km titles in 1987 and 1988.

At the National level, he won gold in the 1985 Under 19 10 km and the 1986 Under 18 3,000m but had to settle for third in the 1986 Australian Junior 20 km road title (**1:37:43**) which was won by Paul Copeland. He also took silver in the Australian Under 18 8 km road title (**37:07**) behind Nick A'Hern.



Kevin, wearing number 9, in the 50 km field at San Jose in 1991

Kevin finally broke through to the big time in 1987 with his first Australian Junior title – the 20 km road walk – with an excellent **1:33:29**. He followed this up with a repeat win in 1988 in a slower **1:38:28**.

During his time as an underage walker, he held Victorian records for the Under 17 5000m and the U19 / U20 1 hour walk (**12.700 km**). He was possessed of sheer speed as the following 1998 newspaper article testifies:

They tore out of the blocks in a 60 meters dash at Olympic Park the other night – seven sprinters and one walker. National junior 20-kilometre walking champion Kevin Lowden, from Ringwood, race-walked the 60 metres in 9.9 sec, which has to be some sort of world record.

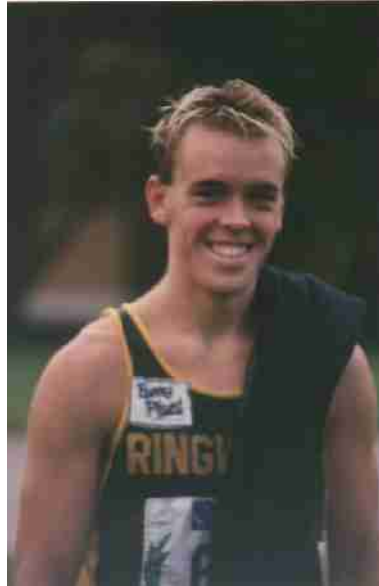
The occasion was one of the Athletics Victoria special meets and he was not allowed to start unless he used sprinting blocks. So his time could have been even faster!

When his Junior career came to an end, he was not slow in taking up the longer distances and, in 1989, he walked his first 50 km event and finished 8th in the Australian title in **4:42:48**.

In the 1991 Lugano Cup 50 km trial at Fishermans Bend in Melbourne, he produced the walk of his life when he finished 3rd in **4:16:43**, a huge PB of some 26 minutes. In fact, on that occasion, he was not even planning to finish. He had entered the event purely to make up the numbers and intended to do 30 km for training. He actually stopped at around the 35 km mark, prepared to call it quits. But those on the sidelines saw that he was only 1 or 2 places outside team selection and urged him to go on. He restarted and the rest is history.

This gained him selection for the 1991 Racewalking World Cup 50 km in San Jose. Unfortunately, there he encountered adversely hot and sunny conditions. He walked a very good first half, maintaining 4 hour pace for 30 km. But the effort was too much and he walked off the track, failing to finish. It was a great disappointment for Kevin and for the team. His DNF combined with 2 DQ's left the Australian team with only 2 scoring athletes in the 50 km.

To quote from Brian Roe's World Walking Cup report (published in AA News – June 1991 No 117), “and Kevin Lowden withdrew after an impressive performance over the first 30 kilometres in his first international.”



Sadly, while this should have been the start of a long and successful senior career for Kevin, it marked the end. He summarised the situation as follows

The reason for me retiring was purely because of work. I was managing a growing company at the time and the owner was forced to take leave due to the death of his wife. I worked 16-20 hours a day for a month. This didn't allow any time for training. After that, I had no will to do any sort of sport. I continued to work hard and after approximately 2 years with next to no training, I realised that I was never going to have the time to honour the commitment required to compete at a higher level.

Kevin is a case of someone who showed the signs of great potential but who did not have the time to build on that potential. But at least he did achieve one International vest and was an Australian Junior Champion. So his place is assured. In retrospect we can only speculate on what might have been!