

Michael Harvey

1981	Racewalking World Cup	Valencia	20 km	49 th	1:46:17
1983	Racewalking World Cup	Bergen	50 km	DNF	
1984	Olympic Games	Los Angeles	50 km	11 th	4:09:18
1985	Racewalking World Cup	Isle of Man	20 km	51 st	1:39:03
1987	Racewalking World Cup	New York	50 km	63 rd	4:28:00
1987	IAAF World Champs	Rome	50 km	25 th	4:11:04
1989	Racewalking World Cup	Barcelona	50 km	67 th	4:33:07
1991	Racewalking World Cup	San Jose	20 km	63 rd	1:29:59
1993	Racewalking World Cup	Monterey	50 km	27 th	4:10.56
1993	IAAF World Champs	Stuttgart	50 km	24 th	4:23:40
1995	Racewalking World Cup	Beijing	50 km	41 st	4:05.58
1995	IAAF World Champs	Goteborg	50 km	26 th	4:16:41
1997	Racewalking World Cup	Prague	50 km	64 th	4:14:09
1999	Racewalking World Cup	Mezidon	50 km	61 st	4:08:58

Born on 5th December 1962, Michael Harvey's first tilt at Victorian level walking gave little indication of just how good he was going to be – 6th in the 1977 Victorian Under 15 1500m track walk in **7:20**. But by the end of 1978, he had won the Victorian Under 17 5000m walk title (**27:20**) and finished the Melbourne Marathon run (**3:30:01**) as a 15 year old.

Within another year, he was mixing it with the top walkers at both senior and junior level over all distances up to 20 km. In quick succession, he was 2nd to Andrew Jachno in the Victorian Junior 3000m (**13:37**), retained his Victorian Under 17 5000m title (**25:14**), came 9th in the Victorian 20 km title (**1:39:20**), came 3rd in the Victorian Junior 10 km (**48:24**), came 2nd to Mike Woods in the Australian Junior 10 km (**48:28**), came 2nd to Willi Sawall in a VAWC 10 km walk (**45:49**), reduced his 1500m track time to **6:04.5** in a Melbourne Interclub race, won the Australian Secondary Schools Championship in **12:57** and finally finished second to Mike Woods in the Australian All Schools Championships in **13:18** (3rd in that race was Peter Stubbs who eventually quit walking and ran in the 4x400m relay in the IAAF World Championships in Rome in 1987). As a 16 year old, Mike was now one of the top juniors.

After a quiet 1980 year in which he completed Year 12, he set himself for the 1981 winter season. Not content to compete in the junior ranks (although only 18), he contested a variety of Victorian senior championships with some success. He was 5th in the Victorian 15 km title (**1:09:57**), 6th in the Victorian 30 km (**2:40:33**) and 3rd in the Victorian 20 km title (his time of **1:36:40** was a new Australian Junior record as this event was held on the track). Then in July he recorded **1:33:30** to come 5th in the 1981 Lugano Cup 20 km trial and gain his first Australian vest. As his final race hitout before going to Valencia, he was 3rd in the Australian Junior 10 km title in another PB time of **45:08**.

His first Lugano Cup appearance at Valencia in October was inauspicious – he came 49th in **1:46:17**. Little did anyone realise that this was the start of an amazing sequence of Lugano Cup appearances – he went on to compete in every one from 1981 to 1999 – 10 in a row. No other Australian walker has been able to maintain form over such an extended period of time.

Back from overseas, he came 3rd in the VAWC December 20 km club championship in another PB of **1:30:37** to round off what had been a wonderful year.

1982 saw his rapid progress continue. He was 4th in the Victorian 10,000m title in March in **43:43** (which was another new Australian Junior record), won the Victorian Under 20 3000m title in **12:18.6**, was 2nd to Michael Woods in the Australian Junior 3000m title in **12:32**, came 2nd to Willi Sawall in a VAWC 10 km walk in **43:22** and then came 3rd in the Commonwealth Games 30 km trial in August (**2:22:00**). This broke the required qualifying standard and he was unlucky to miss out on selection as the 4th Australian in times. He then finished off the winter season by walking his first 50 km (he was 5th in the Victorian 50 km title in **4:46:37**). This while still a junior!

His PBs as a junior are very good, even by today's standards – **5:58** for 1500m, **12:18.6** for 3000m, **43:03** for 10,000m, **1:30:37** for 20 km, **2:22:00** for 30 km and **4:46:37** for 50 km. Yet he did not have the junior ranks to himself, having to compete against the likes of Mike Woods and Andrew Jachno and sharing the accolades with them and other talented walkers of the time.

He was selected along with Willi Sawall, Dave Smith and Tim Erickson to compete in a special Australia vs Italy track match on 30 December 1982. The walk was a 10,000m track and he was third to Sawall and Smith in **44:01**. He had only just turned 20.

1983 saw more PBs and another Lugano Cup berth. He was 4th in the Victorian 20 km title in **1:29:42** in May and went to Adelaide for the Lugano Cup 20 km trial. But he performed badly, coming 10th in **1:35:32**. His only chance for selection now was for the 50 km and he travelled to Sydney where, on a hilly course in the Holdsworth Army Base, he came through the field after a slow start to win in **4:18:09**. Returning to Victoria on a high, he won the Victorian 30 km title in **2:20:29**. This was his first Victorian senior title after 9 fourth placings in a row! It seemed he was doing PBs in all the big races.

His second Lugano Cup appearance was a case of too hard early. After being well up in the first half of the race, he folded at 30 km and eventually retired at 42 km. Mike learnt the hard way just how demanding a 50 km event could be.

1984 was the Olympic year and he contested both trials in March. He finished 4th in the 20 km trial in **1:29:31** to narrowly miss selection but once again he produced the goods in the 50 km trial with a fine 2nd to Andrew Jachno in **4:05:42**. Another two races and another 2 PBs.

With Olympic selection now confirmed in the 50 km event, he prepared in earnest and more PBs followed. He was 4th in the Australian 5000m title in **20:41**, 2nd in the Victorian 20 km title in **1:28:39** and 3rd in the Victorian 15 km title in **1:03:51**. At one stage, he did 6 PBs in a row over 6 different distances.

He ranks his effort at the 1984 L.A. Olympics as his finest hour, finishing 11th in the 50 km walk in a fine **4:09:18**.



Michael crosses the finish line to finish 11th in the 1984 Olympic 50 km event

He finished off the year with **2:59:33** for the Melbourne Marathon as an unofficial runner.

In 1985, he accepted an AIS scholarship and came under the coaching supervision of Craig Hilliard. It was not an automatic match. For instance in February, Mike came down to Melbourne to compete in the Association finals (and did PBs of **12:07** for the 3000m walk and **16:11** for the 5000m run) against Craig's advice. Mike was used to coaching himself and making his own decisions. But he tried anyway and settled down to a year of training in Canberra. In the Lugano Cup 20 km trial in May at Davies Park in Brisbane, Mike was 3rd in **1:29:49**, then in July he was 4th in the 50 km trial in **4:31:18** after suffering the flu. He was selected for the 50 km but Harry Summers and he swapped places and Mike ended up walking the 20 km in the Isle of Man. The switch was a mistake and his 51st placing in **1:39:03** was disappointing.

His stint at the AIS was short lived. After less than a year, he returned to Melbourne in disappointment. Back in his home environment, he immediately responded, winning the VAWC December 20 km club championship in a PB **1:27:42**.

As 1986 started, Mike resumed his relentless pursuit of PBs. His summer was a sparkling one. He won the Victorian 3000m in **12:06.9**, was 2nd in the Victorian 5000m title in **20:33**, recorded **11:50.6** for an Interclub 3000m and was 4th in the Australian 5000m title in **20:26.2**.

Come the winter and he was once again chasing his first Commonwealth Games berth. The trial was held in May and saw sensational performances in the trial by Dave Smith, Simon Baker, Willi Sawall and Andrew Jachno. Mike was just not up to their sheer speed. He did a PB of **2:18:34** but could only manage 5th. His 20 km split on the way through was a PB **1:27:41**.

Not one to let setbacks get him down, Mike continued his season and was rewarded with a PB of **4:04:27** when he came 2nd to Willi Sawall in the Australian 50 km title in August. During the season, he also reduced his 10 km time to **41:07** and his 20 km time to **1:26:48**. As usual, he finished off the year with the annual VAWC 20 km club championship in December where he came 2nd in another PB time of **1:26:47**.

The 1987 summer season saw him continue the trend. On one day in early January, he won a VRWC 5000m walk at Collingwood in the morning in **20:24.5**, then fronted at a 'PB' meeting at Olympic Park in the evening and improved even further to **20:24.0**. Then in the Victorian 5000m title, he was 4th to Smith, Jachno and Baker in **20:23.1** (and this performance was after a 40 km training spin the day before).



Michael (No 26) in the first laps of the 1987 IAAF World 50 km Championship in Rome

With a solid summer of long walking under his belt, he placed 2nd to Willi Sawall in the Racewalking World 50 km trial in **4:20:15** in March and then travelled to his fourth World Cup in New York in May. But once again, misfortune struck. Sick with food poisoning for most of the week before the race, he could only manage 63rd, recording **4:28:00**.

Returning home, he bounced back with a series of PBs, coming 2nd in the Canberra 20 miles in **2:28:35**, 1st in the Victorian 20 km in **1:25:48** and 1st in the Victorian 30 km in **2:17:51**. Selected for the IAAF World Championships in Rome in September, he made amends and was the first Australian to finish in the 50 km. His time of **4:11:04** was excellent given the hot conditions.

At the 1988 Olympic 20 km trial, Mike did a PB **1:25:42** but could only manage 4th behind Baker, Jachno and Copeland. Then, even though he won the Australian 50 km championship and trial in **4:09:10** (his first national championship), he was just outside the Olympic qualifying standard. So a second Olympics eluded him.

He continued to race through the winter and was 2nd in the Canberra 20 mile in a PB **2:27:50**, then set an Australian 30,000m Track record of **2:20:38** in Melbourne in winning a VRWC event.

For 12 years from 1977 to 1988, Mike had continued to improve every year and had an uninterrupted succession of PBs, records, gold medals and international appearances. This had to end sometime and 1989 turned out to be that year. It was impossible to continue on forever in the manner in which he had done so far. Mike rates 1989 as his worst year in athletics. He struggled to 3rd in the Lugano Cup 50 km trial in February in **4:20:54**, then had an even worse race in Barcelona when he came 67th in **4:33:07**. It is ironic that in the year when Simon Baker won the 50 km event, the other Australians including Mike were well back. At the World Student Games in August, he was 13th in **1:37:29** to complete a nightmare season.

He struggled to find some form as he prepared for the Commonwealth Games 30 km trial in October. The trial was held in the Melbourne streets around Olympic Park and Mike headed off fast. He was in 2nd place for most of the first 20 km until first Andrew Jachno and then Paul Copeland passed him. He eventually finished in 5th spot in **2:21:26** and missed selection once again. While it was a promising improvement in form, he was still not back to his best.

1990 was a quiet year as Mike tried to refocus. By August he was finally back in shape and recorded a PB of **1:25:33** in finishing 3rd in the Victorian 20 km title. This was followed 3 weeks later by 4th in the Australian 20 km title in **1:26:18**.

Yet in the Lugano Cup 50 km trial in January 1991, he failed to finish. Then in February, he struggled to 1:45:15 in the 20 km trial. He seemed to have missed out on Lugano Cup selection. But in a twist of fate, the 20 km trial was inconclusive with key DQs and DNFs. So a second qualifying race / fitness test was announced – the Victorian 30 km title in April. In cold wet conditions and battling hail, Mike reached the 20 km mark in 2nd in **1:27:08** and made the team. His 69th in the San Jose race in **1:29:59** was actually quite a good walk given the very hot conditions.

Mike continued to race throughout the winter and eventually as the summer started, he was back to his form of old. In an A Grade 5000m walk in December, he won in a PB **20:14**, beating Paul Copeland and Dariusz Wojcik. Then in the VRWC Christmas 20 km race, he went through the 20 km split in **1:29:20** and kept going to record a PB 30 km time of **2:14:33**.

Again like the previous year, there was confusion with regard to Australian selections. This time it was the Olympic 50 km. The trial in January had produced controversy and a second trial was announced – in Czechoslovakia in April! Mike travelled to Europe and came 15th in the large international field but his time of **4:13:58** was not good enough for selection. He stayed in Europe and chased a qualifier with a series of races, including a further 50 km, on the track in Bergen in Norway. His track time was **4:14:21**.

It was all to no avail and he returned to Australia and walked the rest of the winter season locally with some good results including a win in the Canberra 20 mile in **2:30:14**. Mike was not finished yet.

The 1993 Lugano Cup trial was held in Melbourne in December 1992 in very hot conditions and he finished 2nd in a good time of **4:09:20**. Peter Waddell noted at the time that this was his 12th 50 km finish in under 4:15:00. It gained him yet another Racewalking World Cup selection.

His subsequent effort in finishing 27th in **4:10:56** out of 99 starters in Monterey in Mexico was very good considering the horrendously hot conditions.

Returning to Australia, he joined the newly formed Proclamation Park walking club, training with Paul Copeland and Frank Bertei. The change in environment gave Mike a lease of life and he and Paul led their new club to its first ever team win in the Canberra 20 mile. Paul was 2nd in 2:29:35 and Mike was 3rd in **2:31:18**. It was a time of considerable tension between the Victorian walkers in the VRWC and the Proclamation Park camps and Mike seemed to thrive on it.

And then it finally happened – a sub 4 hour 50 km performance. On a still sunny morning in Richmond in NSW, he won the 1993 National 50 km title with a wonderful exhibition of sustained speed and stamina. His time of **3:57:20** was the fourth fastest ever by an Australian. It was his eighteenth 50 km event and his fourth in 8 months.

This gained him selection in his second IAAF World Championships in Stuttgart. Interestingly, all this was achieved on a reduced training program while teaching and working a second job. Five weeks later, he came 24th in Stuttgart in **4:23:40**.

This string of performances was indicative of Mike's ability to put his races together and produce fine performances over an extended period.

In April 1994, he came 4th in the Commonwealth Games 30 km trial in **2:25:25**, once again just not good enough for selection. It seemed that the one event to consistently elude him was the Commonwealth Games. So he had a season at

home. He won his usual share of Victorian titles and produced a wonderful walk in winning the Canberra 20 mile in a PB time of **2:25:55**. His 5 mile splits were 37:55, 37:03, 35:47 and 35:10. In July he won the National 50 km in **4:08:48** and then in December, he won the Victorian 50 km title and Lugano Cup trial in **4:02:17**. The 4 other selections in the 50 km event (Cousins, McGrath, Thomas and Donahoo) were all new names. The old generation had now all gone – Mike was the only one left and still going strong.

The final hitout in March 1995 before leaving for the Lugano race was the Australian 20 km title and Mike was 2nd in **1:28:05**, just holding out an improving Dion Russell. At the finish, Dion commented *“Another kilometre and I would have caught you”*. Mike’s reply was as sharp as usual: *“Another 30 km and I would have had you”*. Three years later it was a different story.

Mike’s 1995 Lugano Cup 50 km walk in Beijing (40th in **4:05:56**) was his quickest time internationally. He was told at the finish that he still had one lap to go. Mike told the official in no uncertain terms what he thought. Team manager Simon Baker had to drag him away before there was an international incident!

That year, Mike also represented Australia in the IAAF World Championships in Goteborg and his 26th place in **4:16:41** was another good international performance.



Michael shows form and strength as he powers home in the 1997 Victorian 20 km championship at Albert Park.

In March 1996, Mike was back again on the road and trying for that elusive second Olympic berth. He came 3rd in the Victorian 50 km title and Olympic trial in a good **4:05:40** but he just could not sustain the pace to break the 4 hour qualifying time. Another close miss.

But 1996 did have its compensations when he won his fifth Australian 50 km title in **4:11:35**. This makes Mike the most prolific winner of this event.

He was racing less now but still seemed able to come up for the big ones. He surfaced once again in December 1996 to come 2nd in the Victorian 50 km title and Lugano Cup trial. His time of **4:17:40** was much better than it looked on paper as the day was very very hot and windy – a typical Melbourne scorcher. Yet in a complete contract, the Lugano Cup race in April 1997 in Czechoslovakia was walked in snow! Mike came 64th in **4:14:09**.

Over the next year, Mike trained quietly to keep fitness but raced little. But in November 1998, he surfaced again for the Lugano Cup 50 km trial in which he came 3rd in **4:18:34**. As the qualifying standard had been set at 4:20 and as Mike was in the top 5 walkers on times, he felt safe. It was going to be his 10th successive Lugano Cup representation. It was a particularly satisfying race as his preparation had been disrupted and he had injury problems going into the race.

In an astounding decision, he was left out of the team even though he had satisfied all requirements. Athletics Australia’s reason – he was too old! This led to many months of intense lobbying by Mike and his many supporters.

Legal opinion was even sought and this created added pressure. Eventually the week before the team was due to leave, A.A. relented and Mike's selection was confirmed. It is to his great credit that he was able to remain focused during this period of great personal turmoil.

His time in Mezdion of **4:08:58** and his position as the third Australian finisher well and truly justified his selection.

As was his usual practice of recent years, Mike then quietly returned to Melbourne and continued training for one final crack at Olympic selection. In the 50 km trial in December in Melbourne he was well back in 9th place in **4:27:05**. It has been one of those things that had to be done but after so many years of walking 50 km, it was hard to come up once again with a time.

After a very quiet 2000, Mike resurfaced in April 2001 and walked the Centurion 100 mile event at Coburg in **22:51:30** to become Australian Centurion number 43. Then he embarked on a comprehensive winter season (his first in some years) and did so well on the Victorian front that he won the A.V. Norm Goble Trophy for the most points accumulated in Victorian Winter Walk championships. He won the Victorian 20 km (**1:35:01**) and 15 km (**1:09:45**) titles and came 2nd in the Victorian 10 km title (**46:19**).

After a relatively quiet summer spent training, he fronted for the 2002 Victorian 5000m track title and came 4th in **22:10**, giving notice that he was after one further Racewalking World Cup berth. But in the Australian 50 km in Melbourne in May, he could not elicit that one final 50 km performance and he faded to finish 6th in **4:42:10**. It marked the end of Mike's illustrious international career.

Now he has turned his mind to other things – principally participating on the triathlon and marathon fronts. Mike is not one to rest on his laurels and his fitness remains a way of life.

His unique place in Australian racewalking is assured. His list of achievements reads like an impossible wish list

- He has the unmatched honour of 10 successive Racewalking World Championship representations starting in 1989 and going right through to 1999.
- He has won more Australian 50 km titles than any other walker (1988, 1990, 1993, 1994 and 1996).
- In senior Australian championships, he has 5 gold, 4 silver and 4 bronze medals at the individual level.
- In senior Victorian championships, he has 14 individual gold medals. The number of silver and bronze is even larger.
- He has completed the 50 km distance on 32 separate occasions, broken 4:10:00 on 11 occasions and achieved a best time of 3:57:20 to place himself amongst our fastest ever 50 km exponents.

I record here for readers the details of his 32 50 km finishes. It makes for amazing reading.

05/09/1982	Victorian 50 km	Albert Park	5 th	4:46:37
09/07/1983	Lugano Cup 50 km trial	Holdsworth	1 st	4:18:09
18/03/1984	Australian 50 km		2 nd	4:05:42
11/08/1984	Olympic 50 km	Los Angeles	11 th	4:09:18
07/07/1985	Lugano Cup 40 km trial		4 th	4:31:18
17/08/1986	Australian 50 km		2 nd	4:04:27
08/03/1987	Lugano Cup 50 km trial		2 nd	4:20:15
02/05/1987	Lugano Cup 50 km	New York	63 rd	4:28:00
05/09/1987	IAAF World Champs 50 km	Rome	25 th	4:11:04
08/05/1988	Australian 50 km		1 st	4:09:16
12/02/1989	Lugano Cup 50 km trial		3 rd	4:20:54
28/05/1989	Lugano Cup 50 km	Barcelona	67 th	4:33:07
14/07/1990	Australian 50 km		1 st	4:14:56
08/09/1991	Victorian 50 km	Albert Park	1 st	4:11:33
26/04/1992	Olympic 50 km trial	Czechoslovakia	15 th	4:13:58
15/05/1992	International track 50 km	Bergen	8 th	4:14:31
13/12/1992	Victorian 50 km	Knox	2 nd	4:09:24
25/04/1993	Lugano Cup 50 km	Monterey	27 th	4:10:53
10/07/1993	Australian 50 km	Richmond	1 st	3:57:20
21/08/1993	IAAF World Champs 50 km	Stuttgart	33 rd	4:23:40
10/07/1994	Australian 50 km		1 st	4:08:48
18/12/1994	Victorian 50 km		1 st	4:02:17
30/04/1995	Lugano Cup 50 km	Beijing	40 th	4:05:56

10/08/1995	IAAF World Champs 50 km	Goteborg	26 th	4:16:41
31/03/1996	Victorian 50 km		3 rd	4:05:40
01/09/1996	Australian 50 km		1 st	4:11:34
03/12/1996	Victorian 50 km		2 nd	4:17:40
20/04/1997	Lugano Cup 50 km	Prague	63 rd	4:14:09
13/11/1998	Lugano Cup trial		3 rd	4:18:34
02/05/1999	Lugano Cup 50 km	Mezidon	61 st	4:08:58
12/12/1999	Australian 50 km	Albert Park	9 th	4:27:05
05/05/2002	Australian 50 km	Albert Park	6 th	4:42:10

No other Australian walker has had his longevity or matched him in ongoing quality of 50 km excellence.

His PBs also rank him amongst our greatest walkers of any era

3000m walk	11:38 (road)	11:50.1 (track)
5000m walk	19:35 (road)	20:14.0 (track)
10,000m walk	40:50 (road)	41:27.0 (track)
20 km walk	1:25:33	
30 km walk	2:14:33	
50 km walk	3:57:20	
Canberra 20 Mile	2:25:35	