

Michael Hosking – 2016

2016	IAAF World Racewalking Team Championships	Rome, Italy	20km	DNS
------	---	-------------	------	-----

Michael Hosking, born 16th October 1985, was one of a large and enthusiastic sporting family. Coming through the Little Athletics ranks in Canberra, he was a good runner and a good racewalker. So were the rest of the family, with younger siblings Jillian, Elizabeth, Caitlin, Andrew, Rohan and Simon all racewalking at one time or another with ACT Racewalking Club.

Of the children, it was Jillian and Elizabeth who progressed the furthest in racewalking, Jillian competing for Australia in the 2009 World University Games 20km in Belgrade and being selected for the 2010 World Racewalking Cup 20km in Chihuahua (unfortunately she had to withdraw from that team due to injury), and Elizabeth competing in the 2014 World Racewalking Cup U20 10km.

Michael followed the path of so many talented youngsters, trying the sport for a while but eventually giving it away in 2000, aged 15 years.

Fortunately, this did not mark the end of his sporting endeavours. Moving from walking to running, he achieved much over the next few years. Highlights include finishing 2nd in the 2004 Australian U20 3000m steeplechase (9:25.68), representing Australia in the 2006 World Student Cross Country, winning bronze in the 2007 Australian Open 3000m steeplechase (9:16.92) and winning silver in the 2007 Australian U23 12km Cross Country championship (38:32).

He also had successful triathlon and biathlon careers, played football in the Wodonga League in Country Victoria and was a regular runner in many of the big fun runs. But no racewalking!

That changed in December 2015. At 30 years of age, with 3 months of walk training in his legs, he fronted for the annual Athletics Australia 20km invitational roadwalk, held at Fawkner Park in conjunction with the Australian 50km championship. I must admit that when I saw the name on the start list, I did not even know who Michael might be. I had no walkings stats on anyone of that name.

The 20km races produced a whole swathe of PBs and top performances. In the men's race, Quentin Rew walked strongly for an Olympic qualifying time of 1:22:28, with Rhydian Cowley only just 1 minute outside his PB in second place with 1:24:35. But it was Michael who provided the most amazing stat of the meet, not only finishing his first ever 20km walk, but finishing third in **1:26:16**. He was now a serious Olympic and World Cup contender. I wonder if such a thing has ever been seen before anywhere!



Michael walks 1:26:16 in his inaugural 20km at Fawkner Park in December 2015

He now disappeared back to his home base in Wodonga in country Victoria and intensified his training. If he could walk 1:26:16 on 3 months training, what could he do with a few more months of work in his legs.

His next race was in Adelaide on 21st February 2016, the occasion being the Australian 20km Summer Championship which doubled as the World Cup and Olympic Trial. It also featured a large number of top international walkers who had spent the summer in Australia at an AIS camp. The placings tell the story.

1.	Dane Bird-Smith	23	QLD	1:20:04	PB 0:01, OQ
2.	Lebogang Shange	25	STH AFRICA	1:20:06	PB 1:37, OQ, NR
3.	Benjamin Thorne	22	CANADA	1:20:08	OQ
4.	Inaki Gomez	28	CANADA	1:20:22	OQ
5.	Evan Dunfee	25	CANADA	1:20:34	OQ
6.	Perseus Karlström	25	SWEDEN	1:21:03	PB 0:51, OQ
7.	Yerko Araya Cortes	30	CHILE	1:21:26	PB 1:44, OQ
8.	Wayne Snyman	25	STH AFRICA	1:21:45	PB 2:03, OQ
9.	Rhydian Cowley	25	VIC	1:22:07	PB 1:20, OQ
10.	Jakub Jelonek	30	POLAND	1:24:22	
11.	Michael Hosking	30	VIC	1:24:42	PB 1:34, WCQ

Michael finished 11th in a PB of **1:24:42**. He was the third Australian to finish, behind Dane Bird-Smith and Rhydian Cowley. Further, the performance was completed in spite of a sore left hamstring (he had injured it before Adelaide) that saw him lose about one minute with multiple stops throughout the race!



Michael walks 1:24:42 in Adelaide in February 2016

It was no surprise to see Michael named as one of 5 walkers in the Australian team to contest the 20km walk in the 2016 World Racewalking Team Championships in May.

The hamstring issue quickly settled, as evidenced by the third race of his comeback which was in the Melbourne Track Classic 5000m two weeks later. It was another memorable race, with winner Dane Bird-Smith setting a new Australian record of 18:38.97, second placed Rhydian Cowley walking a PB of 19:26.76 and Michael coming home strongly in third place with **19:31.24**. Michael now had 3 races for 3 PBs since coming back from a 15 year hiatus from the sport.

Michael now had 2 months before the World Cup meet in Rome and he had his best block of training thus far. The Owens were good.

Alas, his right hamstring flared up two days after arriving in Rome and that was that. The team medical staff indicated it was due to his back tightening up after the flights. With no time to recover from this injury, he was forced to withdraw from the 20km in the final days leading up to the championships. It was a sad end to what had been a wonderful story.

Since then, Michael and Deanne have added a second child to their family, a daughter to complement their 3 year old son Blair. Life goes on.

Will we see Michael in action again? Only time will tell. Personally, I hope so!