

Rachel Tallent 2010-2017

2010	World Racewalking Cup	Chihuahua	U20 10km	27 th	56:19
2012	World Racewalking Cup	Saransk	U20 10km	21 st	50:24
2012	IAAF World Junior Champs	Barcelona	10,000m	22 nd	49:55.8
2013	World University Games	Kazan	20km	DNF	
2015	World University Games	Gwanju	20km	7 th	1:37:40
2015	IAAF World Champs	Beijing	20km	34 th	1:36:26
2016	World Racewalking Team Champs	Rome	20km	40 th	1:34:16
2016	Olympic Games	Rio de Janeiro	20km	40 th	1:37:08
2017	World University Games	Taipei	20km	TBA	
2017	IAAF World Champs	London	20km	TBA	

Rachel Tallent, born 20th February 1993 in the Victorian country city of Ballarat, started racewalking at 7 years of age. Perhaps, as the younger sister of Jared Tallent, this early start was inevitable - tagging along to his races as part of the family entourage, participating with the local Ballarat Little Athletics centre and racing with the Ballarat Race Walking Club under coach and president Daryl Biggin.

Rachel participated in her first Lake Burley Griffin Carnival in 2000, competing for the Victorian Race Walking Club in the U9 Mixed 1km Walk. She came third with **6:21** and was the first girl to finish. While she was doing her event, older brother Jared won the U17 5km and came third in the U20 10km. She competed in the LBG carnival each year from then on but did not manage to win her age group event again until finally, in 2008, she scored gold in the U16 3km, with a time of **14:35**.

Her first Victorian State Championship medal came in February 2004, just as she turned 11 years of age. Walking as a member of the Ballarat YCW Athletics Club, she was second in the Victorian U14 1500m track championship in a time of **8:15.87**. The following year, she went one better with a win in the 2005 Victorian U14 1500m track championship (**8:28.2**) the Victorian Schools U14 1500m track championship (**7:19.99**).

In 2006, she retained her Victorian U14 1500m track championship (**7:58.5**) but had to lower her colours to Cassie Raselli in the Victorian Schools U14 1500m track championships (**7:26.82**).

Over the next couple of years, she progressed up through the age groups and up through the distances, first with U15 and U16 3000m, then with U17 and U18 5000m. She did not always win, having to share the honours with the likes of Amy Burren, Beth Alexander, Paige Hooper, Hannah Watson and Kristie Goznic, but her times improved year by year and she was starting to make her mark at the national level.



A win in the Australian Schools U17 5000m in December 2009 - Amy Burren, Rachel and Hannah Watson

In December 2008, although still only 15 years of age, she came 2nd to the older Regan Lambie in the U20 10km race at Fawkner Park in Melbourne. Her debut time of **55:03** was good but it was soon to get a lot better. Over the next couple of months, she reduced her 5000m time to **23:42** (at the Victorian Open 5000m championship) and her 10km time to **49:34** (at an A.A. Invitational U20 10km walk at Fawkner Park). Her 5000m time of 23:42 set new Victorian and Victorian Country U17 5000m records.

After a solid winter with VRWC, she further improved her 10km walk time to **49:31** at the Victorian U20 10km championship and secured a win in the Australian U20 10km championship with **50:31**.

She spent January 2010 at the AIS participating in the annual camp run by walks coach Brent Vallance but, while there, she suffered a stress fracture to her right tibia. It was an injury that would flare up again in subsequent years.

Unfortunately it did not respond quickly to rest and treatment and she was forced to sit out the 10km U20 trials for the 2010 World Racewalking Cup, held in Hobart in conjunction with the Australian Summer 20km championships. The results say it all – all 11 finishers in the U20 10km events did PBs. Most of these walkers had spent January training at the AIS – this just goes to show how important this summer activity was in our Junior development plan. The first 4 boys broke the male World Cup qualifying standard of 46:30 and the first 3 girls broke the female World Cup qualifying standard of 50:00. Since the AA World Cup selection criteria stated

The first 3 places in the Selection Trial for all 20km and 10km events will be automatically selected in the team provided they have achieved the performance standard within the AA qualifying period

it meant that the World Cup Junior Teams would now be confirmed as Regan Lambie, Beth Alexander and Paige Hooper (Women U20) and Dane Bird-Smith, Sean Fitzsimons and Rhydian Cowley (Men U20). Rachel would miss out.

In an unexpected turn of events, Paige Hooper, who had also been selected in the World Junior championship team, withdrew from the World Cup team to concentrate on just the one big event. This opened the door for Rachel if she could prove her fitness – she needed to better 25:00 for a 5km walk.

A fitness trial was hastily organized, to be held in conjunction with the VRWC winter season opening round at Middle Park on Saturday 24th April 2010. And beat it she did, recording 24:54. A.A. ratified her performance and she was added to the World Race Walking Cup Team to compete in Mexico 3 weeks later.

Her walk in Mexico was a tough ask for a 17 year old short on training and she struggled to a finish time of **56:19** and 27th place. She had lost too much fitness and was still struggling with the shin injury.

The rest of 2010 was spent completing her final year of secondary schooling and her races were relatively low key.

With her Year 12 studies now behind her, she accepted an AIS scholarship at the start of 2011 and spent January in Canberra in another training camp environment.

Her next big race was to be the U20 10km walk at the National Summer 20km Championship meet in Hobart. It was a big result for the Tallent family with Jared winning the men's 20km title, Claire winning the women's 20km title and Rachel rounding out the Tallent family dominance to win the U20 women's 10km in **48:40**, bettering her own PB by 51 seconds. Rachel, who was just one day short of her 18th birthday, was setting her sights on the 2012 World Junior championships and looked on target.

It's been a great night for the family, we are all rapt with how we've walked and that's exciting. For me heading to the AIS has been amazing, Brent (coach Brent Vallance) and the facilities are fantastic and to take 50 seconds of my PB is just unreal. World Juniors in 2012 are where I want to be so I'll keep working towards that, with the Olympics hopefully somewhere in my future, fingers crossed.



All 3 were winners in Hobart in February 2011 – Rachel, Jared and Claire Tallent

She confirmed her dominance in the junior ranks with a win the following month in the Australian U20 10000m Track Championship in Sydney with **49:39**.

This heralded the start of a 12 month period in which she was unbeatable in the U20 ranks. She won the Australian U20 10km Roadwalk Championship in August 2011 (**49:31**), the AA Invitation U20 10km in Fawkner Park in December 2011 (**48:42**), the AA World Racewalking Cup trial in Hobart in February 2012 (**49:28**) and the Australian Junior 10,000m Track Championship in Sydney in March (**48:59.40**). In Hobart, walking in sweltering temperatures in the high thirties, she won by over 3 minutes in a particularly dominant display.

She was duly selected for both the IAAF World Racewalking Cup in Saransk in May 2012 and the IAAF World Junior Championships in Barcelona in July 2012.

Her walk in Saransk saw her 21st out of the 50 strong field with a time of **50:24** - slightly down on recent times but still a satisfactory walk.

Two weeks later, she walked second to Kelly Ruddick in the Victorian Country 10km Roadwalk Championship in Ballarat in a PB time of **48:13**. She replicated this form with **48:35** in Brisbane a few weeks later on a World Juniors pre-departure camp. Then it was off to a training camp in St Moritz in early July with some of the senior walkers.

Her World Juniors walk in Barcelona in July 2012 was another good performance - 22nd out of 38 walkers, with a time of **49:55.81**.

This marked the end of her junior career and the end of a string of excellent races. From now on, the focus would turn to 20km and she was not long getting times on the board. She raced an inaugural **1:40:52** at the annual Fawkner Park meet in December 2012, improved to **1:36:50** and bronze in the Australian Summer 20km Championships in Hobart in February 2013 and then improved further to record **1:34:53** in the IAAF Challenge Series Meet in Taicang, China, in early March.

But all was not well on her front. The AIS Scholarship program had been shut down in January 2013 and Rachel was no longer a supported athlete, now having to juggle part time work, University studies and racewalk training in what could only be described as a demotivated atmosphere in Canberra.

Her performances over the next couple of years were few and far between and failed to match her form of 2012 and early 2013. She had been selected for the 2013 World University Games in Kazan, Russia, in July but retired at the half way mark in the 20km race.

She was forced to sit out most of 2014 with a reoccurrence of her tibial stress fracture. During this time, she had lots of discussions with her older brother and together they decided that Jared would take over the coaching role.

With renewed enthusiasm, her form soon returned. She started off the 2015 racing year with 2nd in the Canberra Track Classic 5000m in early February with a time of **22:55**. Two weeks later, she won bronze in the Australian Summer 20km Championship in Adelaide with **1:35:03**. Then in May she walked to 7th in the IAAF Challenge Series meet in Taicang, China, with **1:37:45**.

These performances were good enough to warrant selection for the 2015 World University Games in Gwanju, Korea, and the IAAF World Championships in Beijing, China. Her subsequent performances in these two meets were consistent but she had still not taken the next step down towards 1:30 - 7th in Gwanju with **1:37:40** and 34th in Beijing with **1:36:27**.



Rachel crosses the finish line in the 2015 World Championship 20km in Beijing

But things were looking more promising as 2015 drew to a close, when she walked a PB **1:34:16** at the annual Fawkner Park meet in December. She followed this up with a win in the Australian Summer 20km Championship in Adelaide in a big PB of **1:31:33**. As she had now won the official Olympic trial in an Olympic qualifying time, she was an automatic selection for the Rio Games. Finally, she had her Olympic berth and a top 20km time under her belt.

Alas, the joy was tinged with concern as she pulled up with a sore tibia – the third time this injury had flared. Luckily on this occasion, she was able to manage it. Her walk in the 2016 IAAF World Racewalking Team Championships in May reflected this - 41st with **1:34:16** (subsequently upgraded to 40th due to a Russian drugs failure) .

Five weeks before the Olympics, disaster struck in the form of a stress reaction in her left femur which left her on crutches for two weeks. She had to train on an anti-gravity treadmill and was taking daily parathyroid injections for a month to try and help healing of the bone once it was diagnosed.

So she limped through to the Olympics. She even had to take painkillers to get her through the race. Her Rio walk - 41st with **1:37:08** – must be seen in that light.

She was forced to have considerable time off post-Olympics to fully recover.



Rachel in action in the Rio Olympic 20km walk

Early in 2017, she was given the all clear to start training again but she was forced to miss the summer national championships in February with yet another flaring of the old stress reaction in her tibia/shin. Finally she got on the track in March, competing in the Australian 10,000m Track Championship in Sydney in March. The result was a good one - 2nd with a PB time of **46:24.07**.

Having confirmed with this walk that she has now recovered from her injuries, she has been selected to represent Australia in the 2017 World University Games in Taipei and at the IAAF World Championships in London. This will be her third World University Games appearance and her second World Championships appearance.

Her PBs read impressively

3000m	13:25.56	18/2/2012	Sydney
5000m	21:31.0	12/6/2016	Canberra
10,000m	46:24.07	31/3/2017	Sydney
20km	1:31:33	21/2/2016	Adelaide

Sometimes I have to remind myself that Rachel is still only 24 years of age. She has already had a significant number of international vests, including World Championships and Olympics. I know there is much more still to come.