

ROSS REID – STILL WALKING AND STILL CHALLENGING FASHION NORMS

Ross Reid, born in New Zealand on June 4th 1954, is one of our most recognizable club members - his many different uniforms certainly make him stand out in the crowd as the following photos testify.



Ross Reid in action on the track and the road – always visible in his many bright “uniforms” - and occasionally in club uniform!

Ross was a highly ranked New Zealand walker when he migrated to Australia in 1989. The following article, passed onto me by Ralph Bennett, from the New Zealand based Olympic Harrier Club newsletter in 1982, sets the flavour for reviewing Ross's long career.

ROSS REID – OLYMPIC HARRIER CLUB'S NATIONAL ROAD WALKING SILVER MEDALLIST – 1982

Ross Reid is one of the club's top runners when in form, and is also a nationally ranked race walker. He has had a quiet season in 1982, having leg problems, and has not achieved his standard of the 1981 season when he was A team material and also a top road and cross-country runner.

Ross lived in Stratford for 18 years where he commenced an early sporting life, being involved in competitive swimming, where he proved very successful, and in athletics. Later Ross spent time living in Wanganui working for the New Zealand Railways.

In 1971 he began racewalking as a result of a late night party one winter's evening. He was challenged to a 20 mile walking race in Stratford. Finishing on his knees, he vowed never to enter an event like that again. But two weeks later he was back on the road addicted to the sport.

1975 saw Ross gain a bronze medal at the National Race Walking Championships at Hamilton. Although the medal was the result of the third place getter being disqualified, it proved that he was amongst the top few in the country over 5000m. The same year, at the New Zealand Games, Ross finished 8th in the 5000m track walk. At the 1981 track nationals held at Hastings, Ross picked up silver and bronze medals in the 5000m track and 20 km road walks.

In 1982, Ross put up some good performances with Wellington Centre titles, good races in the New Zealand track series and culminating in another medal, this time a silver at the nationals in the 5000m.

Riding a bicycle used to be included as part of Ross's training but now he does more running for his 'walking' training, as he finds walking the longer distances in training harder than running. During the winter, most of his training is between 80-100 miles a week of road running.

One of Ross's more unusual training aspects must be his diet. When questioned, he replied that he has sausage rolls for morning tea and pizza and coke for lunch. Also he consumes large amounts of jelly beans, wine gums, milkshakes and fish and chips. Fish and chips are in fact his raceday meals which he eats 4 to 5 hours before start time. Ross has been a keen outdoors person, having been on an Outward Bound course, and still has connections in this field, going bush at Wangatoko.

1982 was quite a year for Ross as he became the centre of attention as far as a scandal was concerned, involving the illegal use of steroids for race walkers and other track and field athletes in New Zealand. Ross believes that drugs have definitely been taken by leading New Zealand athletes to aid their performance and he said he became “sick of it” and did something about it. He was interviewed on national television on “Eyewitness” and various stories appeared in newspapers around the country.

As far as the future goes, Ross's immediate aims are focused on the 1982-1983 track season where he hopes to

win gold medals at the national championships in the 5000m track and the 20 km road walks.

An indication of Ross's wide range of ability can be seen in some of his best times. For example – 1500m run: 4 mins 12 secs, half marathon run: 1 hr 15 mins, 20 miles walk: 2 hours 37 mins.

Ross was a long time member of the Olympic Harrier club in Wellington, initially as a runner, before getting hooked on racewalking in 1971. However, the club itself was mainly a cross country club and there were only a small number of opportunities to racewalk – in special meets and National championships. The New Zealand Race Walking Association was formed in the mid seventies but was based in Christchurch (the main instigators were Norm Reid, Graham Seater, Mike Parker, Peter and Russell Bailey and Ross) whereas Ross was living in Wellington.

The 1980s were strong years for New Zealand walking with the likes of Graeme Seater, Mike Parker, Kevin Taylor, Shane Donnelley, Shaun Sullivan and Allan Callow who were all Auckland based. Ross and a couple of others were Wellington based but he did still manage to mix it with the top guys on most occasions and, during his 18 year walking career in New Zealand, he won 3 silver and 4 bronze medals in New Zealand Championships. The list reads

5000m	1977 3 rd 25:27.8	1982 2 nd 23:05.7	1983 3 rd 23:23.5	1986 3 rd 21:56.7	1988 2 nd 22:31.3
20km	1981 2 nd 1:41:2	1984 3 rd 1:43:16			

Eventually, after a holiday in Australia, Ross realized that it was time to migrate, both from a walking perspective and from an employment perspective so in 1989 he and his wife Mary packed up bags and moved to Melbourne. Next year will be their 20th anniversary in Australia and Ross says that he has thoroughly enjoyed it.

Throughout his time in Australia, he has been a very consistent competitor, both walking and running, and a loyal member of the Victorian Race Walking Club and more recently the Collingwood Harriers. It is only ever injuries that have keep him away from racing and unfortunately in recent years his injuries have required a lot of management. But to his credit, he always gets on top of things and is soon back on the track.

His PBs are	3000m walk (track)	12:49.0	Melbourne	1989
	5000m walk (track)	21:14.01	Wellington, NZ	15/01/1986
	20 km walk (track)	1:37:04	Dunedin, NZ	1985
	Half marathon run	1:13:41	Wellington, NZ	1987
	Marathon run	3:03:32	Melbourne Marathon	

Ross has long had a penchant for being seen in the crowd. He told me how in the early seventies, he fronted up to an International Meet in Auckland and participated in the walk in bright fluorescent green – after the race, he was told that he was welcome back for future meets but not dressed like that! Unfortunately his racing code tastes have not really improved over the years as you can see from the photos at the top.

Ross – may you have many more years of enjoyment with your walking and may we have many more years to enjoy your sociable companionship.



2005 – Ross, David Armstrong and Andrew Jachno fight out a 3000m walk at Doncaster