

VALE RUSS DICKENSON: 1945 - 2020

The VRWC is saddened to announce the passing of **Russ Dickenson**, Club member, former committee man and Club captain, as well as a formidable competitor in Masters walks. Russ died on Monday 26th October 2020, as the result of a massive stroke. It came out of the blue and has completely taken us all by surprise.

VRWC President has posted the following

I first met Russ on my own return to regular racing at the Club in 2005, after many years away. Possessing a strong and efficient technique, a high level of fitness and a love of racing, Russ was a model for walkers of all ages, but particularly for those of mature years - myself included. He was a hard man to stay up with, let alone beat, once he had the bit between his teeth.

He continued racing with the VRWC even when his energies were directed more towards administrative work with the Victorian Masters Association. Always affable and approachable, Russ was never far away from any group or gathering of Masters athletes where humour and lively conversation was on hand. I will fondly remember racing alongside him (I wasn't alongside very often!) as well as our chats about music and a shared love of guitars.

The VRWC sends its condolences to Russ's family and friends, to his associated at the VMA and to all who knew him and counted him as their friend.

Russ's first walk with us at the Victorian Race Walking Club was on Saturday 17th April 2004, as a leadup to the World Masters in New Zealand. Over the 16 years since then, he has been a regular contributor at Middle Park. He has also been a key player in the Victorian Masters Assn and will be hugely missed by both clubs. For my own part, I am stunned.

Vale Russ!



Left: Russ officiating at Middle Park in July 2012

Right: Russ competing in the World Masters Championship 10km in July 2011

I also reproduce a wonderful obituary to Russ, written by VMA team mate Grant Murfett. Well said, Grant!

Greetings everyone.

In a year that has provided a seemingly endless run of disappointments, Monday was surely the nadir for our club as we received the terrible news of the passing of Russ Dickinson. Having suffered a massive stroke on Sunday, Russ died on Monday morning.

As many will know, Russ was editor of "footprints" for the past 11 years whilst being a serving committee member for VMA of which he was recently accorded the honour of life membership. Russ was also active in various local organising committees across the state and country.

Russ was a decades long fixture at Croydon club, participating in everything at one time or another and finding his forte' in race walking at which he excelled both locally and internationally. He was one of the large Croydon contingent which assaulted the 2016 world championships in Perth competing in the long distance road walks. I'll never forget the pure joy on his face as old mate, Andrew Egginton, stormed across the line to take silver in the 800m. Russ nearly crushed him with a bear hug as Eggy was struggling to recover his breath. I later asked Russ how he managed to, not only be on the track but right on the finish line? He just gave me a wink and, chuckling, told me how he'd chatted up an official as she walked through the marshalling area and onto the track. "She just assumed I was meant to be there and no one said a thing!" I always thought the most impressive thing about it was that no one was the least bit surprised that he'd gotten away with it. Such a charmer.

His athletics commitments extended to the Vic race walking club and as a team mate in the VMA AV shield competition. Even when no longer competing, he would always be on hand to fill up a duty and to give encouragement and support to everyone. Not only VMA athletes but masters from all clubs would be sure to give him a high-five or at least a smart quip in passing which was rejoined with gusto and smiles all round.

It was this sociability and razor sharp wit that made him a popular and sought after drinking buddy when competing interstate. Russ competed at three world championships in Brazil, France and Perth as well as numerous national championships. My memories of Perth 2016, Darwin 2017 and Mackay 2019 are enjoying many an evening sipping ale, chewing the fat, shooting the breeze and generally dispensing verbal fertiliser with such luminaries as Eggy, Cooky, Woody, Robbo as well as the moderating influence of Pam, Jess, Allison et al.

Russ's innate gift for off-the-cuff humour coupled with a genuine talent for communicating made him a natural to publish and edit his Footprints magazine. I'm his time running the newsletter it went from being just a results record to an "infotainment" paper. It's a testament to his diligence and creativity, that in this year of no competition, he still managed to produce such an engaging and interesting publication showcasing biographical pieces on many of our best known and best performed masters athletes.

For me personally, and I imagine, most of our masters community, a night at the track just won't be the same. Nor will the post-track socialising at which Russ was always the gold medallist.

To Russ's family; Kath, Wes, Jane, Tim and the grandchildren as well as his multitude of friends outside athletics we can only offer our deepest condolences and support.

One of the good guys gone too soon but he left the world in a fit, robust body and an undiminished mind which we know he would've wanted.

Vale Russ Dickinson, a great mate and a gentleman.