Ted Allsopp

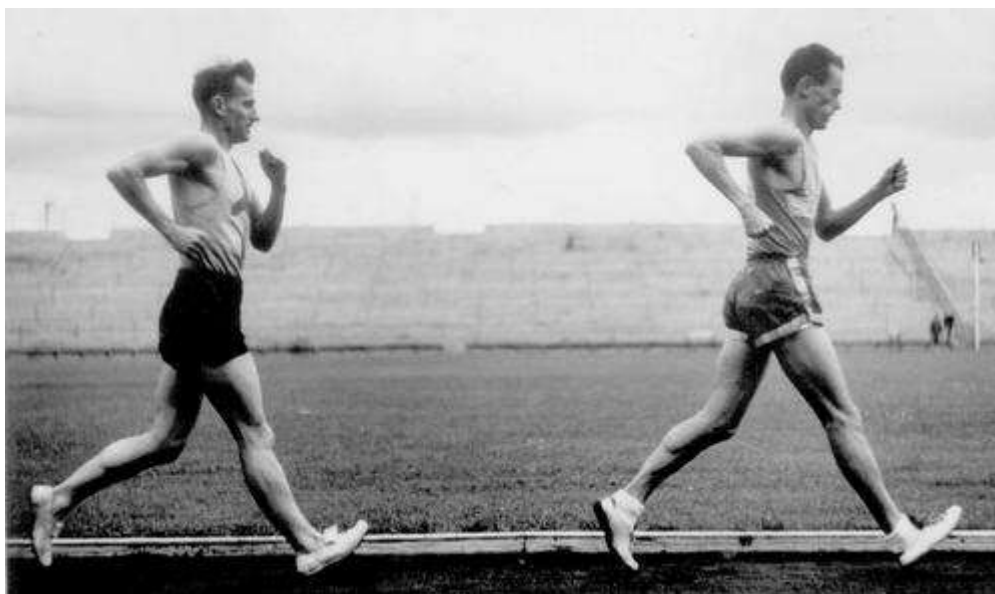| 1956 | Olympic Games | Melbourne | 50 km | DQ | |
| 1956 | Olympic Games | Melbourne | 20 km | 10th | 1:35:43 |
| 1964 | Olympic Games | Tokyo | 50 km | 17th | 4:31:07 |

Edward James (Ted) Ted Allsopp was born on 15th August 1926 in Edenhope in Victoria. As a competitor, he was 5 ft 9½ inch in height and weighed only 145 lbs so he was taller than average and lean – a greyhound possessed of great natural speed and a tireless spirit.

He took up race walking in 1945 at the age of 18 years and was immediately successful with third places in the 1946 and 1947 Australian 10 km championships and a break through win in the 1948 Australian 10 km title in **49:09**.

This was the start of the longest top level career of any Australian walker, before or since. Over the next 26 years he won 23 Australian (11 gold) and 66 Victorian (32 gold) road medals (not to mention the many track medals).

Setting his sights on the 1952 Olympic 10,000m walk, he dominated local ranks from 1950 onwards. He won the Victorian 10 km (**45:56**) and the Australian 10 km (**46:55**) in 1951 and confirmed his status at the top of Australian walking with a string of dominant displays starting on 1 December 1951. On that occasion, he won a VAWC time trial at Olympic Park in **47:15**. Two weeks later, he won a further track time trial in **46:54**, again at Olympic Park. This was followed by a time of **46:31** at Malvern Cricket Ground on 22 January 1952.

He entered the Olympic trial, held in Melbourne on 2 February 1952, as the clear favourite but it was young WA speedster Don Keane who upset his plans and won with a time of 46:11. Ted was second in **47:16** and certainly deserved selection but only Don was named in the team for Helsinki.

Don Keane (left) and Ted Allsopp (right) display perfect walking style as they battle it out on the cinders track at Olympic Park in the early 1950s

Ted worked his way through the winter season with wins in the Victorian 10 km (**45:38**) and the Victorian 10 mile (**78:39**) and then won the Australian 10 km roadwalk (**46:08**) – his third win in a row in this event. But they were poor compensation for losing out on the race of a lifetime.

Ted's meticulous planning for the next Olympics came together with a flurry of top class performances in 1956. He started the year with a win in the Australian 2 Mile track championship in **14:04.4**, ahead of minor placegetters Harry Summers and Ray Smith. Then on 14th July, he won the 20 km Olympic trial in **1:34:26**. Don Keane had led for most of the race but Ted stormed home over the last 4 km to win by just over a minute. This secured his Olympic selection.

He did not contest the 50 km trial, held on 9 September, but did front for a special 2 hour track race which VAWC scheduled on Saturday 22nd September 1956 at Olympic Park in Melbourne. This race still stands today as the most astonishing races ever in Australian history. It resulted in

- A new world record for the 2 Hour Walk   Ted Allsopp
- 6 new Empire Records   Don Keane and Ted Allsopp
- 10 new Australian Open Records   Don Keane and Ted Allsopp
- 9 new Victorian Open Records   Don Keane and Ted Allsopp
- 7 new Australian Junior Records   Noel Freeman
- 7 new Victorian Junior Records   Noel Freeman

Don Keane led for the first 17 km while Ted fought out second spot with Norm Read. As Don tired, Ted stormed home to set the first officially recognised world record ever set by an Australian male walker. Ted powered through the 10,000m in **44:24**, passed the 20 km in **1:33:30** and covered **16 miles 403 yards** in the 2 hours.

A week later he walked his first 50 km event, the Victorian 50 km title, and astonished everyone with a new Australian residential record of **4:24:24.** He started the event only as a training session and was 6 minutes behind Norm Read at the 17 mile mark. But Ted's intensive training program had given him such a wonderful combination of speed and stamina that he was able to go on and win the event by over 20 minutes.

He was duly added to the 50 km team alongside Ray Smith and the local media started to focus on him as a potential gold medallist in the longer walk.

The particulars of Ted's Olympic participation make for interesting reading. When he fulfilled the live-in requirement and moved into the Olympic Village with the other athletes, he was forced to leave his wife Ann who was soon to give berth. On the evening before the 50 km walk, he want to bed early, having no idea that Ann was about to go into labour. About 11PM, an Australian team official took a telephone call saying that Ann had given birth but the official decided to let Ted get a good night's sleep and did not tell him of the birth.

The next morning, Ted picked up the Argus newspaper and was surprised to learn that he was a father. The bus duly took the competitors to the MCG and the crowd of 100,000 cheered him as the walkers did their first two laps of the ground before setting off to walk to Springvale and back. At the 12 mile mark, Ted was disqualified, being reported by the two Russian judges and the chief judge, Libotte of Switzerland.

Three days later he walked in the 20 km event and no one challenged his technique and he finished 10th in **1:35:43**. But it was none the less a disappointing Olympics for Ted.

Ted (n the left)competing in the 1956 Olympic 20 km event

It was a case of wait for another chance and Ted looked confidently to 1960 to make amends. Through 1957 and 1958 he took all before him and was virtually unbeatable over every distance.

By 1959, the young prodigy Noel Freeman had taken the mantle over the 20 km distance but Ted was still clearly the best 50 km walker. His win in the 1958 Australian 50 km in **4:24:26** was almost identical to his 1956 time and well ahead of any other Australian. His win in the 1959 Victorian 50 km (**4.22.37**) was even faster. He was also a regular second place finisher to Freeman over the 20 km distance so the Olympic double definitely looked possible, if not probable.

Ted leads Noel Freeman and Harry Summers in the 1959 Australian 2 mile walk

The Olympic 20 km trial was scheduled for 7 May 1960 in Centennial Park in Sydney and Noel Freeman stormed through the first 10 km in 41:39 before slowing to win in 1:32:12.4. Ted chased him early but paid the penalty and faded to third behind Ron Crawford of NSW. Ron's time of 1:34:22 gained him Olympic selection. Ted's time of **1:34:33** was not deemed to be adequate for selection.

The Olympic 50 km trial was held on 5 June 1960 in Mentone (Melbourne) and Ted, Ron and Noel shadowed each other early after a slow start. When Noel applied the pressure at the 20 km mark, neither Ron nor Ted could respond and Ted eventually retired at the 32 km mark. He had missed out on another Olympics.

The thought of another 4 years must have been a daunting one for Ted who was now in his mid thirties. To make matters worse, youngsters Bob Gardiner, Frank Clark and Peter McCullagh joined Noel Freemen as additional rivals and pushed the standard even higher.

Ted gamely chased them throughout the early 1960's and was rewarded with a fine second place in the 1964 Olympic 50 km trial in Adelaide. While Bob Gardiner won in 4:24:14, Ted's time of **4:30:55** was good enough to gain his second Olympic berth. This time he finished his Olympic 50 km race, but in a time of **4:31:07**, disappointing by his high standard.

Any thoughts of retirement were put aside when it was announced that a 20 mile racewalk would be added to the 1966 Empire Games in Kingston. The trial was held in Campbellfield in NSW in May 1966 and Ted put in a valiant effort, recording **2:39:59** to finish second to Frank Clark who won in 2:36:16. Bob was a distant third. Once again, the selectors were not kind – only Clark was selected to represent Australia. Another near miss for Ted.

Yet 1966 was one of his finest years and he had a number of great battles with Bob Gardiner. He won the Victorian 10 mile and 20 km titles, won a VRWC track 50 km race in **4:24:32** and finished second to Bob in the Australian 50 km championship in a PB time of **4:20:00**. Finally in a wonderful Melbourne to Frankston 25 miler, Bob and Ted, off scratch, stormed through the field to finish first and second in times of 3:22:38 and **3:22:43** respectively.

1968 would be another Olympic chance, even though he would be over 40 years of age. Ted was again in top form leading up to the trial and in a VAWC 40 km at Albert Park on 11th May 1968, he recorded one of the best performances in his entire career, winning in **3:19:50** and beating Bob by nearly 6 minutes.

The 50 km trial was held two weeks later in Toowoomba in Queensland in atrocious weather. Bob won in 4:22:23 and Ted was second in **4:27:40**. Subsequently only Bob was selected for the 50 km event and Ted had missed out yet again.

Ted continued to race throughout the next Olympic cycle, leading up to the 1972 Olympics, and he maintained his position in the top echelon of walkers, still medalling regularly even though he was now in his forties.

Ted, after winning the 1970 Australian 50km championship at Albert Park. Ted was then 44 years of age. He is pictured alongside young Victorian walker Andrew Jamieson, who had just finished his first "50"

Ted's 3rd place in the 1972 Olympic 20 km trial and his 2nd place in the 1972 Olympic 50 km trial (only 8 seconds behind winner Bob Gardiner) should have given him that elusive third Olympic vest, especially given his recent win the Victorian 50 km Championships in a time of **4:20:30**. Disappointedly, Bob Gardiner was the only walker selected for the Mexico City Olympics, getting the nod for both the 20 km and 50 km. Ted had missed out once again. To his credit, he took it on the cheek, as he always did, no matter whether he won or lost.

Ted had achieved 2 Olympic selections but it could just as easily been a record 6 selections. In 1952, 1960, 1968 and 1972, he went into the trials as one of the favourites but on each occasion he was the unlucky one who missed out even though his performances were, in retrospect, certainly sufficient for selection.

Ted retired from our sport at the end of 1972, closing a career that remains unmatched in Australian racewalking. Amongst his many fine victories at the National level is his superb record over the 50 km distance. He won 7 of the first 8 Australian 50 km races held and won the Victorian 50 km a record 12 times. Ted won his last Victorian medal in 1972 – gold in the 50 km title – 26 years after his first medals in 1946. He was 46 years of age.

He excelled over all distances and his list of PBs would still be very competitive today.

1 mile	**6:28**
2 miles	**13:32**
5 miles	**32:36**
10,000m	**44:24**
20,000m	**93:30**
2 hrs	**16 miles 401 yds** (world record)
50 km	**4:20:00**

Ted was proudly a western suburbs boy. He raced his entire career with Williamstown Harriers and lived his whole life in the Williamstown area. After retiring from walking, he carved a new career as himself as an artist.

Ted died on 18th January 2024, aged 97.

I reproduce below Ted's record of medal placings in Australian and Victorian Road Titles. As mentioned above, no other Australian male walker can match this record.

TED ALLSOPP
MEDAL PLACINGS IN AUSTRALIAN AND VICTORIAN ROAD CHAMPIONSHIPS

	Australian 10,000m	Australian 20 km	Australian 50 km	Victorian 10 km	Victorian 10 Miles	Victorian 20 km	Victorian 30 km	Victorian 50 km
1946	2nd 53.35			3rd 52.45				
1947	3rd 52.53			3rd 51.51				
1948	1st 49.09							
1949								
1950	1st 47.49			3rd 51.42	1st 83.04			
1951	1st 46.55			1st 45.56	1st 77.07			
1952	1st 46.08			1st 45.38	1st 78.39			
1953	1st 46.40			1st 47.17	1st 74.37			
1944				1st 44.42	1st 71.09			
1955	1st 47.10			1st 47.13	1st 75.15			
1956				1st 46.54	1st 72.44			1st 4.24.24
1957	1st 46.12			1st 46.34	1st 75.08			1st 4.23.38
1958			1st 4.24.46	1st 46.58	1st 75.34			1st 4.26.14
1959	1st 47.08			1st 45.59		3rd 1.40.12		1st 4.22.37
1960	3rd 47.35			2nd 47.29	2nd 77.28	2nd 1.36.16		1st 4.36.14
1961				2nd 47.34	3rd 79.16	2nd 1.38.31		1st 5.04.53
1962			1st 4.35.06		2nd 77.41	2nd 1.38.44		1st 4.29.06
1963						3rd 1.41.33		
1964			2nd 4.30.56		2nd 79.04			
1965		3rd 1.38.10		2nd 47.47	2nd 79.40	2nd 1.35.35		1st 4.40.09
1966		3rd 1.35.34	2nd 4.20.00		1st 76.12	1st 1.34.08		2nd 4.20.00
1967						2nd 1.34.31		2nd 4.29.52
1968			2nd 4.27.40			2nd 1.35.28		1st 4.31.28
1969								2nd 4.27.51
1970			1st 4.21.05	3rd 47.19				1st 4.27.28
1971			2nd 4.28.05	3rd 48.10		3rd 1.38.48	1st 2.30.39	1st 4.20.30
1972				4rd				1st 4.45.40

AUSTRALIAN			VICTORIAN		
Gold	11		Gold	32
Silver	5		Silver	15
Bronze	4		Bronze	9
TOTAL	23			66