

BETH ALEXANDER – AUSTRALIAN 2010 WORLD RACEWALKING CUP REPRESENTATIVE

Beth, born 28 November 1992 and currently aged 17, is our latest Australian racewalking representative, having secured a place in the 2010 World Racewalking Cup Under 20 10 km roadwalk. Early next month, the Brentwood Secondary College Year 11 student will pack her bags and head off to Albuquerque in New Mexico for 2 weeks of altitude training before travelling to Chihuahua in Mexico for the World Cup.

I asked Beth a few key questions earlier this week and will kick off the article with her answers.

When did you take up racewalking?

I started at Knox Little Athletics in U7 but I did not start race walking until I was eight years old (U9), after I won a race at athletics and one of the walk judges suggested that I should start training. He suggested to my mum that I go to David Blackwood as his son Travis Middlemiss was training with him. I was hesitant at first but soon began training with David Blackwood, just once a week.

When did you decide to start concentrating on walking and make it your major sport? I see that your first winter season at Albert Park was 2005. Who got you to start walking with VRWC?

After winning the Victorian Little Athletics championships in U9 and U11 and coming 2nd to Rachel Tallent in U10, I began to enjoy it more and more. It was then that David suggested I start getting more races under my belt and he took me to Albert Park. This was the first time I had walked on road. It was in U12 that I came to Albert Park, in preparation to make the U13 Victorian team. Unfortunately I did not make the team, just the squad.



August 2005 – Beth's first season at Albert Park – walking alongside Hilary Brazel

What coaching help have you had over the years?

I first started walking with David Blackwood at the age 8 or 9 and was with him for 6 years. He was such a good junior coach. However after Siobhan Donovan and Regan Lamble left to go to Simon Baker, there was no walkers left around my speed as Natalie Laurie was injured. I then made the very hard decision to leave David to go to Simon as Regan, the Attards and the Burrens were all training with him. It was such a hard decision as I had grown up with David as a coach and had a strong relationship with him. I am so thankful for Simon allowing me to be part of the group. I look forward to every training session and have a great support group around me. Training with the likes of Regan, Sarah and Amy Burren, Tamara and Bianca Attard, Brad Simpson and on the odd occasion Jess Rothwell; they are all amazing athletes, so hard working, they are such a pleasure to train with. As for Simon, I could not ask for a better coach. Having someone who has been through your pain of losing a major race, of being injured and who knows how frustrating it gets or being able to share the taste of victory as it tastes so sweet and for him to be just as excited as you are. I am very lucky!

Toughest walking opponents ?

Yes definitely, Rachel Tallent has been one of my toughest opponents through my career thus far. I remember our first race was when we were 8 and 9 at the Victorian LA U9 championship. I also race Rachel at school events as well. Paige

Hooper and Shannon Jennings are also tough competitors from interstate. Our first race together was at the U12 Nationals over 1500m. Paige was 1st, Shannon 2nd and I was 4th. And then there's Regan - I have had many races with her over the years even though she is a year older. She's such a fantastic walker and a great friend.



November 2008 – Beth battles our the Victorian Schools championships with Rachel Tallent

You've been in a pretty tough arena in Victoria with Natalie Laurie, Regan Lamble, Rachel Tallent, Hilary Brazel and Amy Burren all around your age. At various times you have raced against them all, sometimes winning and sometimes losing. Any thoughts?

All of these athletes are such great competitors and I believe they have great futures in the sport. Obviously my main competitors are Regan, Rachel and Natalie as I was born with one of those birthdays where I always have to go up and race the older girls. Nevertheless, I have had some good battles with all these girls, and as you mentioned, sometimes winning and sometimes losing. Victoria has some great juniors who are climbing up the ranks, which is great to see.

Your best races?

I have had a few good races, also a few bad races, but the good races is what I do it for. If I didn't have the bad races then I would have nothing to strive and aim for. I would say my best two races so far have been

- The 2009 Victorian 5000m Open Championship where I did a massive 37 sec PB in the 5km with a time of 23.44. I also walked a World Youth qualifier on that occasion, as did Rachel.
- The 2010 World Walking Cup 10 km trial in Hobart was another good one with a PB of 1:07 and a final time of 49.03. I was in good shape and eager for a PB, just coming off a 3 week training camp at the AIS. I also walked a World Walking Cup and World Junior qualifying time in that race.



**Left: Beth tucked in behind Rachel Tallent and Kelly Ruddick on her way to a PB of 23:44 in the 2009 AV 5000m
Right: Beth battles with Paige Hooper in the 2010 World Cup 10km trial in Hobart**

Current training?

I had a 5 day training camp up at Falls Creek over Easter. I was training twice a day including a walk in the morning and running or gym in the evening. A usual week will consist of a speed session with Simon on a Wednesday, a hill or a long walk (sometimes with Jess) on a Saturday and a shorter but faster walk on a Sunday about 9-12k. On the other days I will either run, swim and I do gym once to twice a week. I usually have one day off.

Your efforts to make World Youth team last year and your buildup this year to your World Cup selection?

It's hard combining training with school and work but with Simon's help I've been able to manage and achieve some good results leading to this year's selection. I am really pleased that all the hardwork is paying off!

Beth is a good example of a talented Little Athletics walker who has continued to excel throughout her secondary school years and who is now poised to make the jump from national to international walker. She has been continuously in the medal mix in Victorian and Australian championships since she made the transition from LA walker in 2005 and the last couple of years have been her best. To just extract a few stats, here are her major walk successes since 2008

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| 2008 Feb | AV U20 5000m track | 3 rd | 26:18.62 |
| 2008 Feb | AV U18 5000m track | 2 nd | 27:46.49 |
| 2008 June | AV Schools U18 5km road | 3 rd | 26:28 |
| 2008 Jul | AV U18 8km road | 2 nd | 25:29 |
| 2008 Aug | Australian U18 8 km road | 1 st | 24:36 |
| 2008 Oct | Vic Schools U17 3000m | 1 st | 25:37.35 |
| 2008 Dec | Aust Schools U17 5000m | 2 nd | 25:52.83 |
| 2009 Feb | AV U20 5000m track | 2 nd | 23:44.54 |
| 2009 Feb | AV U18 5000m track | 2 nd | 24:21.37 |
| 2009 June | LBG Carnival – 10 Mile Open | 8 th | 1:28:30 |
| 2009 June | Vic Schools U20 10km road | 1 st | 52:46 |
| 2009 July | Vic Open 10km road | 2 nd | 50:39 |
| 2009 Aug | AV U18 8km road | 1 st | 24:37 |
| 2009 Oct | Vic Schools U18 5000m | 1 st | 25:34 |
| 2009 Dec | Asut Schools U18 5000m | 1 st | 25:00.70 |
| 2010 Jan | Canberra GP 5000m Open | 7 th | 24:36.84 |
| 2010 Feb | World Cup U20 Selection Trial | 2 nd | 49:03 |
| 2010 Mar | Aust U20 10000m track | 3 rd | 50:30.77 |

We wish Beth all the best in Mexico and hope that this will be the first of many international trips for her.