

Jess Rothwell

2004	Racewalking World Cup	Cheboksary	10 km	5 th	46:44
2008	World Junior Championships	Bydgoszcz	10,000m	4 th	44:44.22

With Jess Rothwell's emphatic record breaking victory in the 2008 Australian Under 20 10,000m track walk championship, the 18 year old Victorian confirmed her place at the top of the Australian Junior racewalking tree.

But it had not been an easy road for her as, up till that year, she had lived on a dairy farm in Katunga, in north eastern Victoria. The nearest walking centre to the family was the Bendigo Walkers Club so it made sense for Jess to join with the Bendigo walkers but Katunga is 1.5 to 2 hours drive from Bendigo. That meant that the opportunities to train with the walkers at Bendigo were few and far between and most of her training was done on her own. Added to that, competing in State championships meant a 3 hour drive to Melbourne that had to be fitted in with her parents' demanding lifestyle as dairy farmers. It's not exactly the ideal environment in which to nurture a champion athlete but Jess and her family have achieved in spite of the odds.

The following results show how she has rarely been out of the medals at the Australian championship level over the last 6 years.

Australian U14 3km road	2002	3 rd	15.42
Australian U16 1500m track	2003	2 nd	6.58.5
Australian U16 5km road	2003	1 st	24.09
Australian U18 3000m track	2004	3 rd	14.35.1
Australian U16 5km road	2004	2 nd	25:09
Australian U18 8km road	2005	2 nd	42:37
Australian U18 8km road	2006	1 st	40:31
Australian U20 10000m track	2007	2 nd	49:29.10
Australian U20 10000m track	2008	1 st	46:15.17

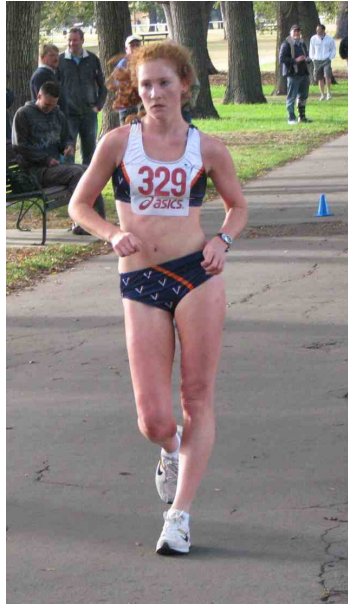
It was her 2003 win in the Australian Under 16 5 km roadwalk in Melbourne that gave her a real national profile. Her time of 24:09 was a huge PB and was walked with consummate ease.



Jess wins the 2003 Australian Under 16 5 km roadwalk in 24:09

In 2006, she approached Simon Baker for coaching help and the partnership has produced spectacular results. 2007 saw Jess doing her Year 12 studies so her racing opportunities were few. She started the year with 2nd in the Australian 10,000m track championship in a PB time of **49:29.10** but then settled down to a year of hard study and raced only occasionally. But when the final exams finished, she burst on the scene with a series of spectacular races.

Things started with a first place in the VRWC 10 km race, held in conjunction with the Australian 50 km championships at Albert Park on Sunday 16 Dec 2007. Her time of **47:03** was a huge PB. Then it was off to Canberra for a 6 week training block with the AIS walkers. Her next appearance at the National Series 20 km walk in Canberra on Sunday 27 January 2008 saw her beat all the seniors to win the 20 km roadwalk in **1:37:34**, a huge first up performance and one that rocketed her into the Australian all time ranking lists. Two weeks later she travelled to Melbourne where she won the Victorian Under 20 5000m track walk title in a new Victorian Junior record of **22:08.76**. Two weeks later, on Sunday 23 February, she was back in action, winning the Under 20 10 km roadwalk held in conjunction with the Australian 20 km championship. Her time of **45:45** was another whopping PB and rocketed her to the top of the Australian 10 km ranking lists. And as we all know, she rounded off her summer season with a win in the Australian 10,000m track championship in mid March with a new Australian Junior record time of **46:15.17**.



Jess records 45:45 at Fawkner Park in Melbourne in February 2008

It was no surprise that she was subsequently named to represent Australia at both the 2008 World Racewalking Cup and in the 2008 World Juniors.

Her first two international races were absolutely fantastic. First, in Russia at the World Racewalking Cup in May, she placed 5th in the Under 20 Women's 10 km roadwalk in a huge PB time of **46:44**. Then in July in Poland at the World Junior Championships, she improved even more to place 4th in the Under 20 Women's 10,000m track walk in yet another PB of **44:44.22**. This performance bettered her own Australian junior record which she set in winning the Australian Under 20 title in March. Jess followed her race plan to perfection, placing herself in the leading group and passing halfway in 22:03. From then on, it was a tough job but she held on magnificently to finish just over 20 seconds outside the bronze medal position.



Jess in action in the Racewalking World Cup (left) and the World Juniors (right)

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