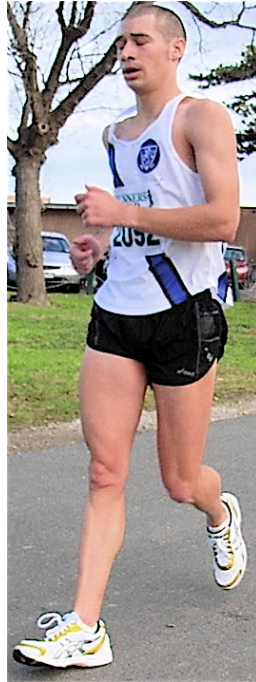


Tom Barnes

2007	World University Games	Bangkok	20 km	17 th	1:33:26
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Tom wins the 2007 Victorian 20 km title in a PB time of 1:27:45

With Tom Barnes' selection in the Australian team for the World University Games, he joins a long and illustrious list of Victorians who have won the ultimate selection – the highly sought Australian vest.

Tom, currently aged 24, was born on 22 September 1982, is 174 cm in height and races at a lean 63 kg. He started racewalking in Little Athletics in the Under 9 age group after his mum insisted that he use it for warm-up.

“I had always told her that I hated it but, when I tried it, I found I could move my hips in just the right way and won the race without getting disqualified. So I kept at it because it was the only event at Little Athletics that I was winning and it grew from there as I became more dedicated and enjoyed it. At school I used to get teased a fair bit for being a walker so when I was a teenager I wasn't doing much training but was doing a lot of cross-country running for my school. I think this gave me a good long distance base that set me up for when I gained the self confidence to train and not care what people at school thought.”

“I competed in the Little Athletics Victorian championships but didn't have much success until Under 15 when I won bronze. I actually don't remember what position I came in my earlier years. For a long time when I was a teenager, I didn't have a coach and just made up training on the day with little real thought behind it. Then I started to plan my own sessions a bit more and think about how I could train to get faster, using what I had learnt in school cross-country training. “

Tom joined the Victorian Race Walking Club in April 2002, having decided to concentrate on racewalking as a serious sporting endeavour. After the National 20 km championship in Sydney in 2004, he met Paul Van Kopplen who was coaching Michael Beaton-Wells at the time.

“He agreed to start coaching me and we formed a really good partnership, partly because I had heard about how good a race-walker he had been, partly because I was so happy just to have a coach, but mostly because of the patience, friendship and belief he showed to me at training and racing. “

Results came immediately

2004	AV 10 km Championship	1 st	47:11.0
2004	AV 15 km championship	2 nd	1:09:33
2004	AV 20 km championship	2 nd	1:32:07

When Paul retired from coaching due to family commitments in 2005, Frank Bertei took over the reigns.

“It took a little while for me to adjust to Frank’s coaching style but by the start of 2006 I felt happy to be coached by Frank. He brought a lot of laughs to training and was big on cross-training and strength training. He also had a lot of faith in me which was really important for my self confidence and it is now at the point where I really trust that the sessions he plans will prepare me solidly for racing.”

Results continued to come and times tumbled.

2005	AV 5000m Championship	2 nd	21.46.65
2005	AV 10 km championship	2 nd	49.23
2005	AV 20 km championship	3 rd	1:33:13
2005	AV 30 km championship	3 rd	2:24:26
2006	AV 10 km championship	1 st	44:49.8
2006	AV 15 km championship	1 st	1:09:05
2006	AV 20 km championship	2 nd	1:31:08
2006	AV 30 km championship	1 st	2:28:45

In 2006, he won the prestigious Athletics Victoria 'Norman L Goble' Trophy for the walker who performs best over the whole range of Winter racewalking Championships. He also won the VRWC Club Keiko Bowyer Trophy as best stylist in 2005 and 2006.

Tom also started to make his presence felt at the National level, picking up medals in both 2006 Racewalking Australia championships. His results were

Racewalking Australia 20 Mile Championship	Canberra	3 rd	2:40:40
Racewalking Australian 20 km Championship	Melbourne	2 nd	1:31:08

A training stint at Threadbo with the AIS walkers and further training opportunities in Canberra provided the necessary impetus to push Tom's times even further down. Subsequent highlights included

Australian 50 km Championship	Geelong	1 Dec 2006	30 km - 2:21:20	(3 minute PB)
Telstra A Series 20 km	Canberra	28 Jan 2007	8 th 1:29:05	(2 minute PB)
AV 5000m Championship	Melbourne	24 Feb 2007	4 th 20:37	(PB)
Australian 20 km Championship	Brisbane	11 Mar 2007	4 th 1:34:25	(very hot conditions)
IAAF RW Challenge 20 km	Shenzhen, China	24 Mar 2007	46 th 1:29:33	
AV 15 km Championship	Geelong	6 May 2007	2 nd 1:08:22	
RWA 20 Mile Championship	Canberra	10 June 2007	4 th 2:33:17	(7 min PB)
VRWC 10 km	Albert Park	23 June 2007	1 st 43:01	(PB)
AV 20 km Championship	Albert Park	1 July 2007	1 st 1:27:45	(PB)

Tom's 20 km PB time of 1:27:45 beat the 1:28:00 qualifying standard required for the World University Games and he was rewarded with Australian representation. In torrid conditions in Bangkok, he walked excellently in his first international representation, coming 17th in **1:33:26**.

Tom had wanted to walk a 50 km event for some time and an ideal opportunity was presented with the Australian 2008 Olympic 50 km trial being held in Melbourne in December 2007. He had taken a significant break after his World University race so had only a couple of months in which to whip himself into shape and it was a quality field with all the main walkers in attendance. He excelled himself with his final time of **4:11:33** for 7th place. To give an idea of how well he raced, his 30 km split of 2:22:05 was less than 1 minute outside his PB for that distance.

Unfortunately, the Athletics Australia selectors chose not to send a 50 km team to the 2008 World Racewalking Cup, thus robbing Tom of a well earned berth. This, combined with his Ph.D. studies at Melbourne University, meant that he had little incentive to push hard in his training. Further, with Chris Erickson now in Canberra and Frank Bertie retired, he was on his own from a training perspective. Yet, he continued to race with impressive results. His 2008 winter season results included 4th place in the Canberra 20 Mile in a PB time of **2:32:32**, wins in the Victorian 20 km championship (**1:29:27**) and in the Victorian 30 km championship (PB of **2:17:00**) and finally a win in the Australian

20 km winter championship in late August in Melbourne (PB of **1:26:40**).

In 2008, Tom chose to start working on a Doctorate in his chosen field of pharmacology and he now had to balance the needs for academic excellence and research with his desire to improve as a walker. Early signs in 2009 showed that he seemed to have his house in order on both fronts.

He started the 2008/2009 summer with some blistering Interclub races in Melbourne, covering the 2000m distance in **8:00**. His first road opportunity came in February when he powered through a 10km race at Albert Park in a PB time of **42:41**. He then took 4th place in the Australian Summer 20 km championships in Melbourne in early March in **1:26.57** and secured selection for the 2009 World University Games, his second international vest.

Unable to take the time off to race internationally like the other top walkers, he continued his preparation in Melbourne, racing regularly at Albert Park in the VRWC club races scheduled in the early part of the winter season. One highlight included his win in the club 35 km championship in a PB time of **2:46:50**.

He has now left for Europe to prepare for his second international race and the signs look promising.

His combination of safe technique, strength, speed and consistency mark him out as a walker with a big future and I hope that there are many more international opportunities for Tom.

And the final words from Tom himself when I asked him for his thoughts on the main influences who have helped him during his career:

“My biggest influence would be my parents: my mum for getting me started in race walking in the first place and keeping my head level, and my dad for never doubting that I could achieve what I wanted, letting me pursue my goals without putting any unreasonable demands on me, and never placing me under undue pressure.

Paul and Frank are obviously big influences as they kept faith in me when I didn't believe I could do well, provided me with the training for getting the most out of my body.

I also really respect the guts and determination of Nathan Deakes and Duane Cousins. I think that those two are the hard-men of Australian walking and have always provided me with inspiration when I have thought about giving up a race.

In the technique department, I have always liked watching old footage of Simon Baker. I've never seen a more complete action.”



Tom walks his first 50 km event in December 2007 – for a time of 4:11:33