

## TEN OF OUR TOP PERFORMERS IN 2009

With another calendar year now completed, it is time to review and highlight 10 of our top Australian performers for 2009, as per my own reckoning. As usual, such a list is produced with the best of intentions but not guaranteed to meet everyone's approval!

### **Jared Tallent**

Jared has to sit at the top of any list given his two top ten finishes in the 2009 IAAF World Champs in Berlin. But these were just two of many highlights for Jared last year. The list includes a new Commonwealth Track Record of 18:41.83 recorded in February in Sydney, a superb 1:19:42 in winning the Australian 20km Summer championship in March, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> in the IAAF Challenge events in Mexico and China, a new course record of 2:14:57 in the Canberra 20 miler in June (with a PB 30km split of 2:05:15), 6<sup>th</sup> (1:20:27) and 7<sup>th</sup> (3:44:50) in the IAAF World Championship 20km and 50km events in Berlin in August, 8<sup>th</sup> in the IAAF Challenge Series Final in Seransk (39:28) in September and a PB time of 3:38:56 in winning the 2009 Australian 50km championship in atrocious weather conditions in Melbourne in November.

### **Luke Adams**

Luke continued on from his superb 2008 year with a wonderful 2009, beating Jared on a number of occasions and recording a top ten finish in the 50km in Berlin. His highlights included 7<sup>th</sup> (1:24:53), 6<sup>th</sup> (1:21:17), 6<sup>th</sup> (1:21:30) and 6<sup>th</sup> (39:16) in his 4 IAAF World Challenge outings in Mexico, China, Spain and Russia, second in the Canberra 20 miler in a PB time of 2:18:49 and 6<sup>th</sup> in the IAAF World 50km championship (with a PB time of 3:43:59) in Berlin. Luke's good form in the IAAF Challenge events earned him third overall, following on from his 2007 overall win.

### **Jess Rothwell**

Jess was our top woman during the summer season, recording a number of superb 5000m walks that culminated in a win in the Victorian 5000m in a new Victorian record of 21:03.33, second only to the great Kerry Saxby-Junna in time. She then won the Australian U23 20km championship in 1:30:25, the fourth fastest Australian of all time, and all while still 19 years of age. She won the Canberra 10 mile event in June in a super fast 1:14:33 and then finished as the first Australian with her 22<sup>nd</sup> place in the IAAF World 20km championship in Berlin in August. Now aged 20, she has a huge future.

### **Cheryl Webb**

Cheryl chased Jess Rothwell over the summer, reducing her 5000m time to 22:19.19 in Sydney in February. In March she won the Australian Open 20km Summer championship in a huge PB time of 1:29:44, becoming the first woman to break the 90 minute barrier in Australia and the third fastest of all time. An unfortunate disqualification in the IAAF World Championship event in Berlin put a dampener on what had been, to that point, a wonderful year but I have no doubt that Cheryl will bounce back in 2010 with more great walking.

### **Peter Bennett**

Peter continues in the forefront of the world in ultra distance walking. His repeat win in the Rouen 24 Hour classic in France in May 2009 was his third in four years and his distance of 213.886km led the world 24 Hour walk rankings for 2009. This is a strong sport in Europe and for an Aussie to be showing the way is pretty astounding. This was actually one of three 24H walks that Peter did this year (May – Rouen in France, July – Brisbane, August – Caboolture) so he shows great resilience in such a demanding discipline. Apart from that, he is a regular racewalking competitor over the shorter distances and won the Queensland 30km title earlier this year.

### **Dane Bird-Smith**

Dane took all before him this year, mixing it with the senior walkers during the summer season (20:22 for 5000m walk at 16 years of age) and being undefeated in junior ranks throughout the year. His wins in the Australian U20 10,000m track championship (43:47) in April, the Australian U20 10km championship (44:07) in August, the RWA 10km championship (44:17) in June and his great 8<sup>th</sup> place in the World Youth championships in Italy (43:53) in July show a continuing excellence. To cap it off, all this was done while he completed the tough Year 12 study year. He finished off the year in style with a win in the Australian Schools U18 5000m walk (21:08). Add to that, his excellent 400m running (48.4 for 400m!) and you have one of our brightest prospects for many years.

### **Brad Aiton**

Like his club mate Dane, Brad took all before him in the U16 ranks, winning the LBG U16 3km walk (14:09) in June, the Australian U16 5km roadwalking championship (23:54) in August and the Australian Schools U17 5000m (23:19) and the U16 3000m (13:19) in December. A prolific racer (over 30 races for the year) with a set of very respectable PBs all done this year.

### **Chris Erickson**

It is easy to focus on the winners and not bother to look further down the ranks but doing so means you might miss other walkers who have had excellent years. Over the past 12 months, Chris has improved his PBs over all distances, taking his times down to 11:32 (3000m), 19:25 (5000m), 41:09 (10km), 1:22:53 (20km), 2:12:34 (30km) and 3:55:30 (50km). Only an illtimed and serious abscess stopped him from competing in the IAAF World 50km championship in Berlin and this was the one blight on an otherwise top year. It is no mean feat to beat all your PBs when you are already competing at a high level.

### **Amy Burren**

It is difficult to pick out one or more walkers from the many very talented girls currently racing in Australia but Amy Burren certainly deserves to be in any short list. Possessed of an impeccable style, she was pretty much unbeatable in major competitions in the second half of this year. Wins at Parramatta in the Australian U16 5000m roadwalking championship (25:01) and in the Australian Schools U16 3000m (14:18) and a great second in the Australian Schools U17 5000m (25:00) put her at the head of the pack. Still only 15 years of age, she has a big future.

**Rachel Tallent**

Sixteen year old Rachel Tallent is shaping as our top junior female walker after a wonderful year's racing. Producing leading 10km (49:34) and 5000m (23:42) times last summer, she took this form into the winter with a series of big 10km performances, reducing her time to 49:31 and being the first Australian to finish in the Australian U20 10km championship in Sydney in August. She finished off her year with a good win in the Australian Schools U17 5000m (24:42) in Hobart in December.



**Jared, Luke, Jess, Cheryl and Peter in action during 2009**



**Dane, Brad, Chris, Amy and Rachel in action during 2009**