

## TOP MALE PERFORMERS IN 2010 – A BAKER'S DOZEN

With another calendar year now completed, it is time to review and highlight our top Australian performers for 2010, as per my own reckoning, - men this week and women next week. As usual, such a list is produced with the best of intentions but not guaranteed to meet everyone's approval! I found this year that there were so many good performers that I could not stop at 10 – so here are my baker's dozen for the men.

### 1. **Jared Tallent**

Jared's year has been wonderful once again, taking all before him. He started with wins over 5000m in the Canberra GP (19:08) in January and the Sydney Track Classic (18:51) in February, along with a win in the Australian 20km championship in Hobart in a PB time of 1:19:15 (he was one of only a small number of walkers world wide who broke 80 minutes this year). He then medalled in the World Walking Cup 50km (3:54:55) in Mexico in May even though he was vomiting for the second half of the race and could not feed! Wins in the Canberra 20 mile in June (2:26:35) and the Victorian 30km (2:08:27) in August were followed by an amazing 10km PB of 38:29 when coming 8<sup>th</sup> in the IAAF Challenge Series final in Beijing in September. The gold medal in the Commonwealth Games 20km in Delhi (1:22:18) was the final icing on the cake. This year was a lower priority walking year for Jared as he worked towards a business degree but the part time nature of his training did not seem to impact on his ability to produce big time performances throughout the year.

### 2. **Dane Bird-Smith**

Dane raced an amazing 26 times this year and nearly every walk was at elite standard. Over the 10km distance, he walked under 44 minutes on 8 separate occasions and his PB of 41:32, done when coming 5<sup>th</sup> in the World Junior championship in Canada was as good as we have seen. Undefeated in Australian U20 ranks for the past 2 years, he is still only 18 years of age and will be a junior in 2011. During the year he scooped the pool at National level, winning the Australian Junior 10000m in Sydney in March (43:16), the U20 10km Federation championship in Canberra in June (43:42) and the Australian Junior 10km in Brisbane in August (43:00). He represented Australia in both the Race Walking World Cup in May (his DQ the only blot on an otherwise flawless year) and the World Junior championships in August. His PBs - 1500m in 5:23, 3000m in 11:23, 5000m in 20:10 and 10000m in 41:32 - mark him out as a champion of the future.

### 3. **Luke Adams**

Luke's year has been another one of continuing high standard, starting with second placings to Jared Tallent in the Australian 20km (1:22:07) and the Sydney Track Classic 5000m (18:56) in February. A disappointing and unexpected DNF in the World Race Walking Cup 50km in May was soon balanced out by some great walking in Europe which included 6<sup>th</sup> in the La Coruna leg of the IAAF Racewalk Challenge Series (1:21:35) and a win in the Cork City Sports Festival 3000m in a PB 10:59.04. Another PB followed when he recorded a great 38:41 to took 9<sup>th</sup> in the IAAF Challenge Series Final 10km in Beijing in September. His silver medal in the Commonwealth Games 20km in Beijing (1:22:31) was a case of "What if..." after a trip at the 18km mark marred what had been up till then the perfect race. He then finished the year off in grand style with an inaugural win in the Australian 50km Championship with a time of 3:47:34.

### 4. **Chris Erickson**

Chris Erickson started off his year in February in grand style with bronze in the Australia 20km championship in Hobart in February (1:23:37) and a win (his 5<sup>th</sup> out in the last 6 years) in the Victorian 5000m title (19:33). His 15<sup>th</sup> place in the World Race Walking Cup 50km in Mexico in May (4:03:56) was his best international finish and could have been even better if not for some unscheduled toilet stops mid race. Seconds to Jared Tallent in the Canberra 20 mile (2:27:59) and the Victorian 30km (2:09:29 - a 3 minute PB) were followed by his first ever win in the Australian 20km championship in Brisbane in August (1:24:45). He then surprised everyone with a 2+ minute PB time of 38:59 in the IAAF Challenge Series Final 10km in Beijing. The only bad race in the entire year was his 8<sup>th</sup> place in the Commonwealth Games 20km in Delhi in October - perhaps it was a case of one race too many. But it does not detract overall from what has been another great year.

### 5. **Ian Rayson**

Ian Rayson broke clear of the other up and coming young male Australian walkers with a year of outstanding walking. He started off strongly in February as the fourth Australian to finish in the Australian 20km championship in Hobart (PB 1:27:53). This walk also won him the U23 championship gold medal. He was the only Australian to finish in the torrid Mexican conditions in the World Race Walking Cup 20km in May (1:31:21). He then chased Jared Tallent and Chris Erickson the whole way in the Canberra 20 mile in June to finish 3<sup>rd</sup> with a PB 2:28:13. In August he finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Australian 20km in Brisbane in a PB 1:26:41, improved to 1:26:30 in Melbourne in October and then ended the year on a high by taking silver in the Australian 50km with an inaugural time of 3:59:43.

### 6. **Peter Bennett**

Peter Bennett continues to excel in the high octane sport of ultra distance walking and, once again, I have him in my yearly best. This year, he won the Australian Centurions 24 Hour event in April (171.9km), finished a close second in the Rouen 24 Hour Walking Festival in France in June with a PB 216.24km and then took 4<sup>th</sup> overall in the Australian 48 Hour Track championship in Caboolture in August with a new Australian record of 280.203km. In fact, on that occasion, he was the first male Australian to finish, beating all the runners! He also doubles as our one of our top Masters racewalkers, taking golds in the M50 division in the Pan Pacific Masters Games in October.

### 7. **Brad Aiton**

For the third year in a row, Brad Aiton has been the top walker in his age group in Australia, being virtually undefeated against his peers over that entire 3 year period. Still aged only 16, he is our top U18 male walker and his PBs stand at 5:56 (1500m), 11:46 (3000m), 21:32 (5000m) and 44:00 (10,000m). A real strength walker, his Canberra carnival walks read impressively - 2<sup>nd</sup> in the U20 10km in 48:06, 1<sup>st</sup> in the U16 3km in 13:01 and finally 3<sup>rd</sup> in the U18 5km in 23:19, all in the space of a couple of

hours. His 44:00, done at Middle Park in November, is a 2011 World Youth championship qualifier and he looks set to take one of the two team spots on offer next year, given current form.

8. **Jesse Osborne**

Jesse Osborne is the most recent Queensland walker to really hit his straps, having battled over the year with Nathan Brill for the title of the top U16 male walker in the country. His most recent win in the Australian All Schools and his superior times overall edge him ahead of the younger Nathan who took the honours against him in Canberra and in the National Roadwalks in Brisbane. Aged only 15, Jesse's PBs stand at 5:54 (1500m), 12:27 (3000m), 21:41 (5000m) and 45:46 (10km). With the 2011 World Youth qualifying standard set at 45:00, his next challenge is now to reduce his 10km time over the summer and hold off any other challengers to consolidate the second selection spot behind Brad Aiton.

9. **Nathan Brill**

Nathan, born 24/05/96 and hence aged 14, has had an extraordinary first season of walking, doing PBs week after week and dominating the 14yo age group Australia wide. His winter season saw wins in the Victorian Schools and Victorian Roadwalking titles as well as 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> placings in the Canberra carnival against older walkers. His winter culminated with a big win in the Australian U16 5km championship. He ended the year with second place to Jesse Osborne in the Australian Schools U16 3000m in December in a PB time of 13:07. His PBs are amongst the best ever for a 14 year old Australian (6:16 for 1500m, 13:07 for 3km, 22:29 for 5km and 47:30 for 10km). Another big prospect.

10. **Rhydian Cowley**

Rhydian, aged 19, is another talented youngster making his mark on the Australian scene. Over the year, he has raced 28 times, repeatedly setting PBs throughout the year over all distances. A consistent second place getter to Dane Bird-Smith in the Junior ranks, his good form was rewarded with selections to the World Race Walking Cup in May (15<sup>th</sup> in 46:57) and the World Junior Championships in Canada (17<sup>th</sup> in 44:59). His PBs, all done this year, stand at 5:41 (1500m), 7:54 (2000m), 20:54 (5000m), 43:22 (10km) and 1:31:26 (20km). One of his highlights came in August when he took 4<sup>th</sup> place in the Australian Open 20km championship in Brisbane with 1:35:47. He now looks set to transition well into Open ranks next year.

11. **Blake Steele**

Hard working 17 year old Blake has raced 27 times this year, mostly at a high standard. Unfortunately he suffers from being the youngest walker in a very strong U20 age group and his 4<sup>th</sup> place with 44:27 in the Australian trial in February meant that he missed out on World Racewalking Cup selection. Dropping back to his own age group, he won the Australian U18 5000m championship in Sydney in March with 21:49 and finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in the U20 10000m (45:00), thus narrowly missing out (again) on selection for the World Junior championships. His Canberra double in June - 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Open 10 Mile in 1:18:23 followed by 2<sup>nd</sup> to Dane in the U18 5km (21:36) was impressive. His efforts were rewarded when he was selected to represent Australia in the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore in August, where he finished 11<sup>th</sup> in 48:00 in oppressive conditions. He has now accepted an AIS scholarship and 2011 should see him continue to work his way towards the top of the junior ranks. His PBs, all set this year, are impressive - 5:47 (1500m), 12:22 (3000m), 20:52 (5000m), 43:57 (10km), 1:18:23 (10 miles).

12. **Adam Rutter**

Adam, aged 24, is another of our top walkers who continues to make his presence felt. He started off the year with a fine 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Canberra Grand Prix 5000m walk with 19:52 but then failed to finish the Australian 20km championship in Hobart. Bouncing back to take 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Sydney Track Classic with 19:13, he then failed to finish in the World Race Walking Cup 20km in Mexico. From then on, his year took a turn for the better and has seen him crank out 10km times of 40:30 (Sydney, August), 40:34 (Melbourne, August) and a PB 39:20 (Beijing, September). He finished the year with a win over 20km in Melbourne in December with a time of 1:24:56. His year has shown enough form for us to hope that 2011 will see him back to his best.

13. **Sean Fitzsimons**

Sean Fitzsimons, another 19 year old, has had a mixed year but has shown enough potential to be in the mix, especially in the U20 10km category where he has recorded times of 43:32, 43:05 and 42:14 and where he ranks number 2 behind Dane Bird-Smith. He was selected in the World Race Walking Cup team but unfortunately was disqualified. Hopefully 2011 will see a more consistent year from Sean.



**Jared Tallent, Chris Erickson, Dane Bird-Smith, Luke Adams and Ian Rayson in action during 2010**



**Peter Bennett, Brad Aiton, Jesse Osborne, Nathan Brill and Rhydian Cowley in action during 2010**