

## A BAKER'S DOZEN - TIM'S WALKERS OF THE YEAR - 2011

I interrupt the *Walker of the Week* awards to jump to my yearly thoughts on *Walkers of the Year*. This week the focus is on our men and next week I will hone in on our top women. Remember it is my own informal award process and it is based on my own perception of how the year has gone. As usual, such a list is produced with the best of intentions but not guaranteed to meet everyone's approval! I take into account a number of factors which include

- Whether the walker has shown improvement during the year (as evidence by PBs)
- The consistency of performance
- The quality of performance

So here goes with my own **Baker's Dozen – our top 13 men for 2011**.

### 1. Jared Tallent

27 year old Jared Tallent is once again streets ahead of everyone else. The bookends were wins in the Australian 20km (1:20:19) in Feb and the Australian 50km in Dec (3:49:33). In between were a whole series of top walks including a season leading 1:19:57 when coming 4<sup>th</sup> in the IAAF 20km in China in April, yet another win in the LBG 20 mile in June (his 6<sup>th</sup>), 3<sup>rd</sup> in the IAAF World 50km championships (3:43:36) in Sept and 10<sup>th</sup> in the IAAF Challenge Final, also in Sept (39:49 for 10km). This magnificent set of results was achieved on what was definitely a sub-maximal workload as he spent the year working part time and studying full time. Jared remains the consummate big time performer.

### 2. Luke Adams

35 year old Luke Adams raced sparsely this year but the quality was there for all to see. His year started in February with 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Aust 20km (1:21:00). He was 2<sup>nd</sup> once again in the Canberra 20 Miles (2:19:46) before heading off to prepare for the World Champs. His usual meticulous training produced the goods in Daegu as he raced to a superb 5<sup>th</sup> place in the 50km (3:45:31), thus securing his Olympic berth. He then beat Jared to finish 8<sup>th</sup> in the IAAF Challenge Final 2 weeks later (39:46 for 10km). He also produced two 5000m times of 19:07 during the year, once in Sydney (March) and once in France (July).

### 3. Dane Bird-Smith

Dane had another superb year, obviously enjoying his final year as a junior (although he does not in fact turn 20 until July 2012). He walked in 21 races during the year with times that were always impressive. During the year, he improved his PBs to 5:21.65 (1500m), 19:44.4 (5000m), 40:56 (10km road – new Australian U20 record) and 41:02.18 (10,000m). He won golds in the Australian Junior 10,000m walk in March, the RWA Junior 10km in June and the Australian Junior 10km roadwalk in August as well as taking second in the Hong Kong 10km international in April and 13<sup>th</sup> in the IAAF Challenge final 10km in September. He then finished off the year in fine style with a debut 20km of 1:26:38 at Fawkner Park earlier this month. And of course, how can we forget his superb run in the IAAF World Mountain Running championships (first Australian to finish in the Junior event).

### 4. Nathan Brill

15 year old Nathan Brill has gone on his merry way this year, being undefeated in U16 competition Australia wide. His PBs were all set in 2011 – 1500m (5:58.17), 3000m (12:32.06), 5km (21:32) and 10km (45:42). His workload for the year was impressive – 36 finishes from 36 starts in walk events, most of them seeing him finish in 1<sup>st</sup> place, even against older walkers. This combined with wins in the Victorian and Australian U16 3000m, the LBG U16 3km, the Australian U16 5km and the Australian All Schools U16 3000m see him right up near the top of this year's list.

### 5. Tyler Jones

Like Nathan, 13 year old NSW walker Tyler Jones is undefeated in his U14 age group within Australia and has also recorded a very impressive set of PBs this year – 6:34.73 (1500m), 13:57.85 (3000m) and 5km (24:33). Wins included the Australian U14 3000m, the Australian Little Athletics U13 1500m, the LBG U14 2km, the Australian U14 3km and the Australian U14 All Schools 3000m.

### 6. Ian Rayson

23 year old Ian Rayson has also had a very good year although with a few patchy periods. His first race for 2011 was the Australian 20km in February where he finished with 1:26:56, a time that qualified him for the World Uni Games. He then travelled to Slovakia in March for a 50km but it is fair to say that his great 3:59:43 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the 2010 Australian 50km had obviously taken a lot more out of him than he expected and he failed to finish in his second 50km. This, combined with his first year in full time employment, took a fair toll on him and it was not until June that we saw him back in top shape (in the LBG 20 Mile in Canberra in June he came 7<sup>th</sup> with a PB of 2:31:31). He then headed off to St Moritz to prepare for the World Uni Games in August but suffered a disappointing DQ in the big event. Rather than sit back and feel sorry for himself, Ian bounced back in the best possible manner, recording successive 20km PBs of 1:25:59 (Melbourne, October) and 1:24:25 (Sydney, November). The icing on the top of the cake came in December when he finished 4<sup>th</sup> in the Australian 50km at Fawkner Park in a PB time of 3:57:55, an Olympic A qualifier.

### 7. Jesse Osborne

16 year old Jesse Osborne found himself in the bottom half of the U18 division this year so had to compete against walkers a year older than himself but it did not stop him recording some great results. First to his 2011 PBs – 12:10.11 for 3000m, 21:05.14 for 5000m and 44:30 for 10km – which stack up very well against the times recorded by our top walkers at a similar age. A prolific racer, his major performances included gold in the Australian U17 5000m in March, silver in the LBG U18 5km, an excellent 18<sup>th</sup> in the World Youth Championship 10,000m in Lille in July (45:11), silver in the Australian U18 5km in August

and silver in the Australian All Schools U18 5000m in December. He finished off the year in fine style, recording a 44:30 PB over 10km at Fawkner Park a few weeks ago. He will still be U18 next year and will be hard to beat in that age group.

**8. Brad Aiton**

17 year old Brad Aiton would be the first one to tell you that this year has been a quiet one by his own high standards. Year 12 study requirements ensured that his training was necessarily curtailed and his PBs this year have been restricted to two distances – 1500m (5:41.88) and 5000m (20:37.0). But his racing continued to be of a high standard and golds included the Australian U18 5000m in March, the LBG U18 5km in June, the Australian U18 10km roadwalk in August and the Australian All Schools U18 5000m in December. He also finished 16<sup>th</sup> in the World Youth Championship 10,000m (45:00) in July.

**9. Chris Erickson**

30 year old Chris Erickson continues to perform at the elite level demanded of our senior AIS walkers and 2011 has seen him produce PBs over 5000m (19:24.85) and 50km (3:51:57). But in many ways, this has been a disappointing year for him as he walked below form to take 4<sup>th</sup> in the Australian 20km championships in February (1:25:29) and hence missed out on a 20km berth for the 2011 World Champs. Travelling to Europe in March, he recorded a PB of 3:54:53 in the Dudince 50km but was beaten by a resurgent Nathan Deakes so missed out on a World Champs 50km spot. Racing on the local front for the winter, he recorded 4<sup>th</sup> in the LBG 20 miles in a good 2:24:37, won the Australian 20km championship in August, recorded an excellent 35km at Middle Park in September (2:37:36) and raced yet another 50km PB at Fawkner Park in December (3:51:57). But once again he found himself ranking 4<sup>th</sup> in the 50km and so has missed Olympic selection in his preferred event. But he does seem to be coming of age as a 50km walker now and must be looking confidently forward to the next few years.

**10. Nathan Deakes**

With his last significant races in 2007, the big question was whether 34 year old Nathan Deakes could ever recover sufficient form to challenge again at the international level. His first tentative steps were taken in February when he finished 5<sup>th</sup> in the Australian 20km championship in 1:25:38. With the cobwebs blown out, he then recorded a very impressive 3:48:08 when coming 6<sup>th</sup> in the Dudince 50km in Europe in March. His next race was in June when he captured bronze in the LBG 20 mile with 2:21:50. Although his subsequent walk in the IAAF World Championship 50km in Daegu in September was ultimately disappointing for him, we were just so excited to see him lead for the first half of the event – was the Nathan of old back? He finished the year off in good style, taking silver in the Australian 50km championship in December (3:50:34), almost certainly cementing his Olympic selection. He's back!

**11. Brendon Reading**

22 year old Brendon Reading continued on from his fine form of 2010, recording PBs over nearly all distances - 11:56.73 (3000m), 20:19.70 (5000m), 42:19 (10km), 1:24:51 (20km) and 2:31:10 (20 Miles). His first big race of the year was the IAAF Challenge event in China in April and his time of 1:24:51 cemented his place in the World University Games. His PB in the LBG 20 mile championship in June and his fine 16<sup>th</sup> place finish in the World Uni meet in China were the other highlights. His 5000m PB of 11:56 came in November and put the finishing touches to a good year.

**12. Peter Bennett**

56 year old Peter Bennett is a regular in this list and he has forced his way in again this year with more superb ultra distance walks. One of our top Masters walkers and the President of QRWC, Peter just gets better as the distances get longer. You don't do many ultra walks per year for obvious reasons but his two outings were outstanding. In June he won the Rouen 24 Hour Championship in France with 213.000km (his third win in 5 years in this prestigious event) and in December he finished 19<sup>th</sup> in the Coast to Kosci 240km road race (against a field of runners) in a time of 38:06:38.

**13. Blake Steele**

18 year old Blake Steele started his year impressively with second to Dane Bird-Smith in the Australian U20 10,000m walk (44:18.66) and recorded a PB time of 20:37.43 for 5000m a week later in Sydney. Alas, a series of niggling injuries and a serious shoulder injury (which required surgery) laid his plans to waste and it was not until December that he burst back, winning the U20 10km at Fawkner Park with a PB 43:27. With Dane moving into senior ranks in 2012, Blake is our top ranking junior and will be a front runner for the 2012 World Junior champs.

Last week I reviewed my top male walkers of the year but in retrospect, I realize that I had one important omission – that of Andrew Jamieson. So before I go onto the women, I must rectify that and give a bit of information about Andrew's 2011 year.

**Andrew Jamieson**

Super masters walker Andrew Jamieson turned 65 in June of this year and he has been on the records rampage since then, setting new World M65 bests for 3000m (14:38) and 20km (1:41:27) and new Australian records for 2000m (9:33) and 15km (1:16:51). Andrew already holds all the M60 world records and he has now started on his M65 campaign. At the World Masters Championships earlier this year in USA, he won all 3 M65 division walks (5000m, 10km and 20km) and remains very competitive in the Open division, coming 5<sup>th</sup> in the Australian 20km championship in August (1:41:27) and the LBG 10 Mile in June (1:21:54).



**Jared Tallent, Luke Adams, Dane Bird-Smith, Nathan Brill, Tyler Jones**



**Ian Rayson, Jesse Osborne, Brad Aiton, Chris Erickson and Nathan Deakes**



**Brendon Reading, Peter Bennett and Blake Steele**