

TIM'S TOP TEN (WELL, ELEVEN ACTUALLY) MEN FOR 2012

1. Jared Tallent

28 year old Jared, the World Number One walker as calculated by All-Athletics website and the number one Australian by the proverbial mile. Third in the 2012 World Cup 50km in Saransk (3:40:32) and second in the Olympic 50km (a PB 3:36:53) backed up by 7th in the Olympic 20km (1:20:02). Wins in the Australian 20km championship in February (super hot 1:23:01 in Hobart) and the LBG 20 Miler (2:18:00) as well as a number of top eight finishes in IAAF events including 2nd in the IAAF Challenge Series event in Chihuahua, Mexico (1:21:50) made for a superb year. He was also dominant over the shorter 5000m, recording 18:47 (first Australian and second overall) in the Sydney GP walk and 19:08 to win the 5000m invitational walk at the Australian T&F Champs. What didn't he do!

2. Nathan Brill

16 year old Nathan Brill has gone from strength to strength this year. Set fantastic PBs over all distances - 1500 (5:51), 2000m (7:52), 3000m (12:15), 5000m (20:44), 10km (53:52) and 10 miles (1:15:33). Was second to Blake Steele in the U20 10km World Cup trial in Hobart (46:02 in the heat) and then went on to come a fantastic 32nd in the World Cup in Russia in May with a PB 44:52 (as the youngest competitor in the field, at only 15 years of age). Won the Aust U17 5000m in March in Sydney (21:30) and was third in the U20 event (45:00), did a fantastic double at the LBG carnival in June (3rd in the 10 mile with 1:15:33) and then 2nd in the U18 5km (21:29), won the Australian U18 10km (45:03) in Adelaide in August, won the Australian Schools U18 5000m in Hobart in December (21:05) and already has two 10km qualifiers for the 2013 World Youth Championships (43:42 and 43:44). Looks unstoppable!

3. Chris Erickson

31 year old Chris had another fantastic year but not an easy one. Was one of five Australian 50km Olympic qualifiers but missed out on an Olympic berth by 1 minute. Readjusted his sights to chase a 20km spot. Walked a fantastic Australian 20km championship in Hobart in February, finishing only 1 minute behind Jared Tallent in a clear second place, only to be thwarted by the 38°C temperature - his time of 1:24:12 not fast enough. Improved to 1:23:09 in China in March and then nailed 21st place with 1:22:20 (a 30 sec PB) in the World Cup in Russia in May, being the first Australian to finish in the event and nailing an Olympic A qualifier. Second to Jared in the LBG 20 Miler (2:26:36), he came a valiant 38th in the Olympic 20km in 1:24:19 after a long year.

4. Dane Bird-Smith

20 year old Dane has made a rapid transition into the senior ranks with a string of high quality races and PBs this year. First to the PBs - 11:23 (3000m), 19:02 (5000m), 40:21 (10km) and 1:23:15 (20km). Did his 5000m PB in coming 3rd in the Sydney track classic in February, walked well in the heat of Hobart to take 6th spot in the Australian 20km (1:28:12), improved to 1:23:15 in the China leg of the IAAF Challenge Series in March, came 44th in the World Cup 20km in Russia in May (1:24:41), won the U20 10km at the LBG carnival in June in his last Junior race (41:05), won the Australian Winter 20km Championship in Adelaide in August (1:23:28) and came a fantastic 5th in the IAAF Challenge Final in China in September (40:32). Not a bad year by any measure.

5. Jesse Osborne

17 year old Jesse Osborne also knocked out PBs galore this year - 1500m (5:39), 3000m (11:51), 5000m (20:23), 10km (43:18) and 10 Miles (1:14:55). Although doing his final year at school, he managed to combine it well with his racewalking and, like Nathan, is another young man with a big future. Was third in the U20 10km World Cup trial in Hobart (a hot 47:12) and went on to walk a great 24th in the World Cup in May - a PB 44:15). He won the U18 5000m (21:29) and was second in the U20 10000m (44:36) at the Australian Champs in March, walked a great double like Nathan in the LBG (2nd in the 10 Mile with 1:14:55 and 3rd in the U18 5km with 22:17). Was second in the U18 10km Aust championship in Adelaide in August (45:57), second in the Australian Schools Champs in Hobart in December (21:46) and finished his year on a winning note with a 10km PB of 43:18 at Fawkner Park the following week.

6. Blake Steele

19 year old Blake Steele won the World Cup trial in Hobart in Feb - his 10km time of 43:46 excellent in the oppressive heat. This was followed by a win in the Australian U20 10,000m championship in March (44:23), 17th place in the World Walking Cup in May in Russia (a PB 43:12), second place in the U20 10km in the LBG carnival in June (44:54) and 17th in the World Junior Champs in Barcelona in July (a PB 43:04). His final high quality race for the year was a second place in the Australian 10km U20 championship in Adelaide in August (45:33). He will join our senior ranks in 2013 so we wait to follow his transition with interest.

7. Andrew Jamieson

66 year old Andrew Jamieson had such a superb year that he was one of 3 finalists for the IAAF Masters Male Athlete of the Year. He continued to re-write the M65 record books, doing times that defy logic. During 2012, he bettered his own or set new World M65 records on 8 separate occasions - new records set this year include 2000m (9:10.4, 27 Oct,

Melb), 3000m (14:13.6 - 3 Nov, Melb), 5000m (24:14.0 - 14 Apr, Melb), 10km (48:38 - 19 May, Melb) and 20km (1:40:13 - 29 July, Melb). He also set a new Australian M65 record for the 1500m - 6:52!

8. Tyler Jones

14 year old Tyler Jones has also set PBs over all distances this year - 1500m (6:16), 2000m (9:27), 3000m (13:19), 5000m (23:06) and 10km (50:57). Now that does read impressively for a 14 year old! Was undefeated all year in his age group - firsts in the Australian U15 3000m in March (13:46), LBG U16 3km in June (13:26) and the Australian U16 5km in August (23:33). Bypassed the Australian Schools Champs in December but will be back in action again in Perth in March for his next National outing.

9. Peter Bennett

57 year old Peter Bennett continues to lead the way on the Australian ultra distance walking front. He won the Caboolture 12 Hour walk in Feb (94.593km), walked yet another centurion 100 mile in the Coburg 24H, won the annual Rouen 24 Hour Classic in France in June (a whopping 213km for his fourth win in 6 years), won the Queensland 24 Hour championship (actually beating all the runners on this occasion) with 185.293km, and finally had a great walk in the annual Coast to Kosci in December (240km in 37:17:57 and 17th out of a field of 34, all the others being runners). Combined with this, he regularly races with Queensland Racewalking Club and is their President. And he is one of our top Masters walkers as well, regularly medalling in the M55 division. A jack of all trades!

10. Luke Adams

36 year old Luke Adams only raced sparingly this year, coming off the back of a serious hamstring injury incurred in 2011. His first race was the IAAF Challenge Series 20km in China in March (10th in 1:22:50). From there it was onto Russia for the World Walking Cup where he finished 27th in the 20km with 1:23:28. His Olympic 50km walk saw him come 26th with 3:53:40 and then onto China for the World Walks Challenge Final (9th in 41:06). He finished the year on a high, winning the Australian 50km championship this month in Melbourne with 3:57:24, earning a place in the Australian team for the 2013 IAAF World Championships. Luke continues to walk consistently well and has plenty of top performances left by all indications.

11. Rhydian Cowley

21 year old Rhydian Cowley is starting to make an impact in the senior ranks in this, his second year in the Open division. Has done a whole swag of good PBs this year - 1500m (5:29), 2000m (7:42), 3000m (11:39), 5000m (19:29), 10km (40:38), 20km (1:24:34) and 10 Miles (1:10:48). Started the year with 7th in the Sydney Track Classic in Feb (19:52), had a tough one in the heat at Hobart in March (9th in 1:42:41) but bounced back in March in China, recording 1:27:21. Had another tough walk in the World Cup in May (90th in 1:32:28). But from there on, his year has been fantastic. Won the LBG 10 miler in June (1:10:48), was second in the Australian Winter 20km championship in Adelaide in August (a big PB time of 1:24:34) and has had a succession of very fast track times this summer in Melbourne. He is rapidly improving and I look forward to 2013.

Others whom I reviewed (not in any particular order) but who did not make my final cut.

Adam Rutter

26 year old Adam Rutter had a great first half of the year, starting with a win in the NSW 10,000m track walk championship in March (41:29), a fifth place finish (19:10) in the Sydney Track Classic 5000m in February, was 5th in the heat of Hobart in the National 20km (1:26:04), walked a superb 1:21:23 for 9th in the IAAF Challenge Series race in China in March and then finished 23rd in the World Cup 20km in Russia in May (1:22:54). His Olympic 20km DNF was a disappointment after such a good buildup and it then came as a surprise when he announced his retirement from the sport. We are saddened to see this fine walker call it a day but he leaves as a dual Olympian, a feat that few can boast.

Nathan Deakes

Unfortunately I can't put 35 year old Nathan in on the basis of his one walk - 22nd in the Olympic 50km with 3:48:45. It was his only appearance for the year and he then announced his retirement from the sport.

Ian Rayson

I can't put 24 year old Ian Rayson in either on the basis of his walks this year - 8th in the Sydney Track Classic in February with 20:12, 8th in the Australian 20km in Hobart with 1:32:57, DQs in China in March (20km) and Russia in May (World Cup 50km). His one bright spot was his second place in the Australian 50km this month with 4:00:39. But it was not enough to resurrect a very sparse year.

Brad Aiton

18 year old Brad Aiton did one PB this year, taking his 10,000m track time down to a very respectable 42:51 in February. He failed to finish in the heat in the U20 trial in Hobart in February but was still selected in the World Junior team on the basis of numerous qualifiers and a good racing record. He had a good LBG carnival in June - a win in the U18 5km (21:22) and a third place in the U20 10km (48:42) but was subsequently disqualified in the World Junior

Champs in July. He bounced back to win the Australian U20 10km in August in Adelaide (44:59) to complete what was a patchy year by his high standards.

Brendon Reading

23 year old Brendon Reading failed to finish in the heat Hobart in February but did bounce back in March in China with a 20km time of 1:25:07. Was third in the Australian Winter 20km championship in Adelaide in August (1:30:42) and won the invitation 20km at Fawkner Park in December (1:26:23). Promise but not enough to get into the top 10.