

TIM'S TOP TEN WOMEN FOR 2012

1. Regan Lamble

21 year old Regan Lamble has had a superb year, setting PBs over most distances - 3000m (13:06), 5000m (22:06), 20km (1:30:03), 30km (2:21:43) and 20 Miles (2:32:17). Second to Claire in Hobart in February (1:36:52), she was our top female finisher in the World Cup in May (24th in 1:34:34), walked a brilliant 20 Miler in June over the hilly LBG course (2:32:17) and then fronted for the Olympic Games in August. Her walk there was fantastic - 17th in 1:30:03. Regan raced lightly for the year but peaked when it counted - London. She now looks set to take over the mantle from Claire Tallent. At only 21 years of age, her transition to the Open ranks has been fast and furious.

2. Claire Tallent

31 year old Claire Tallent had another fantastic year apart from two major blips that put a dampener on what would otherwise have been her greatest ever year. Her PBs were all set this year - 3000m (11:55), 5000m (21:29), 10km (44:19) and 20km (1:28:53). Her win in Hobart in February was extraordinary - 1:32:58 in 38°C conditions - the only A qualifier done on the day, men and women included. A month later in China she came 5th in the IAAF Challenge Series race there, her time of 1:28:53 the second fastest ever by an Australian and one of the top times for the year. Her DQ in the World Cup in Russia in May was heartbreaking - she was a clear fourth and chasing the Russians in front and probably on target for a sub 1:28 time when shown the red card at 14km. She bounced back with 3rd in the IAAF Challenge Series in Italy in June (1:32:30) and won both walks in the Oceania Championships in Cairns in hot conditions in July (21:47 for 5000m and 44:19 for 10km). Her DQ in the London Olympic 20km was in similar circumstances to Russia - she was in the chasing group, well inside the top 10 and in the second half of the race and looking comfortable. She had 2 final races for the year, winning the Australian 20km in August in Adelaide (1:31:12) and coming 7th in the Challenge Series Final in China in September (45:29) before announcing her retirement. She leaves an enviable record but it is fair to say it could have been so much more but for those two DQs.

3. Beki Lee

26 year old Beki Lee has also been in great form this year, setting PBs for 3000m (12:45), 5000m (21:23) and 20km (1:32:14). Always super fast, she has now transitioned into a top 20km walker. She battled Tanya Holliday over 5000m early in the year, just losing out by one second with 21:23. Her next race was the infamous 20km in Hobart where she hung in, coming third with 1:39:16. But, as she already had an A qualifier under her belt (from Dec 2011 -1:33:09), her Olympic spot was secured. But her next encounters were not good - a DNF in China in March and then a DQ in Russia in May in the World Cup. After proving her fitness at a VRWC race in Melbourne in June (1:36:45), it was off to Europe to prepare for the Olympics. It all came together in London as she finished 28th in a PB time of 1:32:14. Then as the icing on the cake, her partner proposed to her straight after the race and she accepted. It was a fairy tale ending to her competitive year.

4. Tanya Holliday

24 year old Tanya Holliday has come back strongly over the last 2 years after a horror run of injuries that put her career on hold for a number of years. Like the other girls, she has recorded PB after PB during the year to now stand with these 2012 PBs to her credit - 3000m (12:46), 5000m (21:21), 10km (43:58), 10 miles (1:13:16) and 20km (1:31:38). It was just her timing that was wrong. Out with a nagging injury for the latter part of 2011, her 2012 campaign was slow to start. Some fantastic track times indicated her overall fitness but a DNF in Hobart did in any Olympic / World Cup plans. She came 7th in China in March with a PB 1:33:15 but it was too late - the teams had already been finalised. In May, she improved to 1:31:28 in the SA State title and she did a huge double in the LBG carnival in June - first in both the 10 miler (1:13:16) and the 5km (21:45). She walked second to Claire Tallent in the Oceania 10km in July in Cairns (45:23) and finished her year off with a huge 10km walk of 43:58 a few weeks later in winning the SA State Title. A great year but a frustrating one.

5. Rachel Tallent

19 year old Rachel Tallent has been far and away our top junior woman this year, taking all before her. Like her older compatriots, she has improved over all distances this year - 3000m (13:25), 5000m (22:50), 10km (48:13) and 10 miles (1:21:20). She won the Junior 10km trial in Hobart in the heat (49:28), won the Australian Junior 10,000m title (48:59), was the first Australian to finish in the World Cup U20 10km (21st in 50:24), won the Victorian Country 10km in a PB 48:13 and did a big double in Canberra (seconds in the Open 10 Mile with 1:21:20 and the Open 5km with 23:02). She then took 22nd place in the World Junior Championship 10,000m walk with 49:55 and finished the year with her first ever 20km at Fawkner Park in December - 1:40:52). A great year. We now look towards 2013 as she enters senior ranks.

6. Lyn Ventris

We may have thought that 56 year old Lyn Ventris would not be able to match her 2011 year with her many W55 world records and her IAAF World Master Athlete of the year award. But she did it all again in 2012. During this year, she broke her own records as well as took those she did not already hold. She literally broke the records every time she walked (a slight exaggeration, I know, but that is what it felt like). The final set is pretty impressive - 3000m 14:16, 5000m 23:57, 10km 49:15, 20km 1:40:41. To take the 10km as an example, she set the original record at the Australian Masters Games Adelaide in October last year with 50.32. She then broke it again at the World Masters Indoor Championships in Finland in April with 49.59. She then broke it again on July in Perth with 49.34 and then in August she bettered it again with a time of 49.15. When she took bronze in the Australian Open Women 20km championship in Adelaide in August, her time of 1:40:41, bettering her own W55 World Record of 1:43:11 (done in July) by an extraordinary 2:32. For this walk, her Masters Age Graded calculation came out at 101.67%. It was no surprise to us when she won the IAAF World Masters Athlete of the Year for a second straight time.

7. Jemima Montag

14 year old Jemima Montag has had a great year with a very impressive list of PBs - 1500m 6:49, 2000m 9:10, 3000m 13:38, 5000m 23:59 and 10km 53:58. She also remains the walker to beat at a national level. A prolific racer, she always produces at the highest level. One of her most impressive races was in February when she won the Sydney Track Classic B Group 5000m in 23:59, beating most of the U20 girls who were vying for World Cup spots - she was aged only 13 at that stage! She won the Australian U15 3000m in Sydney in March (14:17) and won the U16 3km in the LBG Carnival in June (14:10) and then backed up for 6th in the Open 5km with 25:28. Then it was a break for her as she spent some time focusing on her dual career as a runner. Coming back after the break, she was a DNF in the Australian roadwalk champs in Adelaide in August. This was followed by a suffered a rare defeat as she was bettered in the Australian Schools Champs in Hobart in December, even though she did a PB 13:38 for the 3000m U16 track walk. But overall, her year places her firmly as our top U16 girl, even though she is still aged only 14.

8. Jasmyn McDonald

13 year old Jasmyn McDonald is untouchable in the U14 age group and has done some superb PBs this year for one so young - 1500m 6:53, 2km 9:23, 3km 14:18 and 5km 24:56. She won the Australian U14 3000m in Sydney in February (14:43), won the Australian Little Athletics U13 1500m in April (7:06), won the U14 2km at the LBG Carnival in June (9:32), won the Australian U14 3km in August in Adelaide (14:31) and won the Australian Schools U14 3000m in Hobart in December (14:43). A completely unblemished record for the year.

9. Clara Smith

14 year old Clara Smith has set a couple of pretty impressive PBs this year - 3000m 13:22 and 5km 24:46 and has been the only girl capable of challenging Jemima Montag in the U16 group. She came second to Jemima in the Australian U15 3000m in Sydney in March (14:30), was second to Jemima again in the LBG U16 3km in June (14:25), was second to Zoe Boldiston in the Australian U16 5km in August (24:46) and finally broke through to win the Australian Schools U16 3000m in December (13:22) after a great battle against Jemima. A case of a walker continuing to improve over the year and reaping the benefits.

10. Kelly Ruddick

39 year old Kelly Ruddick shows no signs of slowing as she continues to rampage in both the W35 and Open divisions. Theoretically you shouldn't be doing PBs at that age but obviously no one told Kelly. Her PBs this year are impressive - 22:18 (5000m), 46:52 (10km) and 1:38:32 (20km). Perhaps her best walk for the year was in the Invitational 5000m at the National T&F Titles in Melbourne in April where she battled Claire Tallent the whole way, finishing second in a big PB of 22:18, only 3 seconds in arrears. She won the Victorian 10km (47:07) and the Victorian Country 10km (a PB 46:52) and walked well in the Oceania Championships (2nd in the 5000m with 23:09 and 3rd in the 10km with 48:39) in the heat of Cairns. She then finished off the year in grand style with 3rd in the 20km at Fawkner Park in December, her time of 1:38:32 a PB by over 1 minute.

11. Michelle Thompson

43 year old Michelle Thompson has had another stellar year in the ultra distance walking arena. She started off her 2012 campaign in February, walking an amazing 101.158km in the Canberra Mt Stromlo 12 Hour road event and coming 3rd overall against a field of runners. She then walked 54.636km in the Coburg 6 Hour Championship in Melbourne in March for a new Australian record. She was back in Coburg in April for the 24 Hour Championship, setting new Australian records for 50 Miles (9:35:43) 100 km (12:09:52) and 12 Hours (98.655km). In Sydney in June, she improved her 24 Hour total to 174.896km, passing the 100 mile mark in a PB 21:36:14. Finally, in September she defended her RWA 50km title in Melbourne, finishing with a time of 5:23:37.

Others I considered

Jessica Pickles

18 year old Jessica Pickles has produced some good PBs this year - 13:40 for 3000m, 23:30 for 5000m and 48:07 for 10km. She was second to Rachel Tallent in Hobart in February (52:45) and second to her in the Australian U20 10,000m championship a month later (49:21), thus earning a place in our World Junior team. She did a good double in the LBG carnival in June (50:03 for the Open 10km and 24:32 for the Open 5km) but was disqualified in the World Junior race in July in Barcelona. With Rachel Tallent missing from the meet, she won the Australian U20 10km in Adelaide in August but her time of 51:55 was slower than expected. She also won the Australian University Games 5000m in Adelaide a month later, but again in a slow 25:49. So overall a good year but not good enough for a top ten finish.

Zoe Boldiston

15 year old Zoe Boldiston spent the first half of the year off with injury. Since coming back, she has set a number of PBs in the second half of the year - 1500m 6:57, 2000m 9:30, 3km 14:14 and 5km 24:38. She surprised with a win in the Australian U16 3km in August in Adelaide (24:38) and then backed up with a further win in the Australian Schools U18 5000m in December in Hobart 25:01) . But overall, not enough races to push herself into the top 10.

Nicole Fagan

23 year old Nicole Fagan also pushed herself up the ranking lists this year with two impressive PBs - 3000m 13:09 and 5000m 22:23 - and she did represent Australia in the World Walking Cup. But to be honest, that was compliments of her time in Fawkner Park last December. Her 20km outings this year have not matched that - 1:48:30 in Hobart in Feb, 1:42:48 in China in March and a DNF in Russia in May.

Jasmine Irshad

15 year old Jasmine Irshad has set PBs over all distances this year - 2000m 9:22, 3000m 14:30, 5km 25:45 and 10km 55:46 - but these are probably not sufficient to really give her any leverage to force her way into the top ten.