

## TIM'S TOP TEN MEN FOR 2014

It's that time of the year again so off we go with my Top Ten Men for 2014. As usual, our top international walkers top the bill but there are a few new faces further down the list. These are very much my own individual picks based on a combination of absolute quality, consistency across the year and improvement relative to past years. Of course, your picks might differ. Anyway, read on. As usual, it was a very tough task.

	<p><b>1. Jared Tallent (SA)</b>          With a bronze medal in the 2014 IAAF World Cup 50km in May (3:42:48), 30 year old Jared Tallent deservedly takes top billing in my yearly list. This, combined with his second place in the 2014 IAAF Race Walking Challenge Series, continues his many years of ongoing excellence. A record breaking 8<sup>th</sup> win in the annual LBG 20 Miler in June (2:27:27) added additional icing to the cake. But it was not all good news with a DQ in the Australian Summer 20km championship and a DNF in the Australian 50km championship.</p>
	<p><b>2. Dane Bird-Smith (QLD)</b>          22 year old Dane Bird-Smith continues to improve quickly and is now ranked amongst the top 20km walkers in the world. How's this for a list of major performances - a win in the Australian Summer 20km championship (1:22:39), a win in the Australian 10,000m championship (38:57), a win in the Queensland Track Classic 5000m (18:59), 14<sup>th</sup> in the IAAF World Cup 20km in a PB 1:21:42, a great overseas tour mid year which included a fantastic 10:56 in winning the Cork City 3000m in Ireland, a win in the Australian Winter 20km roadwalk championship (1:27:38) and a huge second place in the 4 Day Lake Taihu Tour in China in October (only a 1 minute penalty in the final stage cost him the win). Without doubt the next great hope for Australian walking and a definite medal possibility for the next Olympics.</p>
	<p><b>3. Chris Erickson (VIC)</b>          33 year old Chris Erickson had his best year ever with PBs in both 20km and 50km and his highest ever international finish (apart from Comm Games which are pretty small fare nowadays). Starting the year with second in the Australian Summer 20km championship (1:25:23), he followed up with a PB 12<sup>th</sup> place in the IAAF Challenge event in Nomi, Japan, in March (1:22:19), 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Australian 10,000m championship that same month in Melbourne (40:51), 10<sup>th</sup> in the IAAF World Cup 50km in May (a PB 3:49:33), second to Jared in the LBG 20 Mile in June (2:31:50) and finishing off with a win in the Australian 50km championship (3:56:38) in December.</p>
	<p><b>4. Nathan Brill (VIC)</b>          18 year old Nathan had a huge battle early on with fellow junior walker Jesse Osborne but it was Nathan who had the better year overall after injury sidelined Jesse. Nathan was second in the World Cup 10km trial in Hobart (PB 42:46), won the Australian U20 10000m in March (43:12), was 7<sup>th</sup> in the World Cup U20 10km in May ((PB 41:07), was second in the LBG 10 Miler in June (1:13:20) and finished 17<sup>th</sup> in the IAAF World Junior 10,000m walk in USA in July (42:54). He has now shifted to Canberra to live and, with the facilities and training partners available there, he should continue to his improvement next year.</p>
	<p><b>5. Tyler Jones (NSW)</b>          Although overshadowed by older juniors Nathan Brill and Jesse Osborne, 16 year old Tyler had a superb year, being untouchable in his age group and chasing the older duo whenever the opportunity arose. He started the year with 3<sup>rd</sup> in the World Cup U20 10km trial in Hobart in Feb (PB 45:39), won the U17 5000m (22:20) and took third in the U20 10,000m (46:08) at the Australian Junior T&amp;F Champs in March, suffered his only setback for the year when disqualified in the World Cup in May, bounced back with a good double in the LBG carnival in June (3<sup>rd</sup> in the Open 10 Mile with 1:13:53 and 1<sup>st</sup> in the U18 5km (22:45). Won the Australian All-Schools U18 5000m in December with a PB 21:03 and then followed it up a week later with a PB 44:13 win in the U20 10km at Fawkner Park. Currently leading the pack towards the 2015 World Youth Champs, a young walker with a big future.</p>
	<p><b>6. Jesse Osborne (VIC)</b>          19 year old Jesse Osborne looked unbeatable in the first 4 months of the year, recording</p>

	<p>PB times of 5:19 (1500m), 7:38 (2000m), 11:19 (3000m), 19:46 (5km) and 41:27 (10km). His combination of speed and endurance and his ability to push himself to the absolute limit marked him out as a special walker. Yet his 12<sup>th</sup> place at the World Cup in May (42:13) showed that all was not well as a niggling hamstring issue refused to go away. Even with ongoing treatment and drastically reduced training, it refused to heal and his 33<sup>rd</sup> place in the IAAF World Junior champs (49:53) was walked in obvious pain. Back home, he was under doctor's orders to take 6-12 months off completely to allow what was now a major tear time to heal. We are now waiting to see the outcome of that enforced layoff.</p>
	<p><b>7. Rhydian Cowley (VIC)</b>  23 year old Rhydian Cowley continued to chop away at his PBs this year. He started the year with 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Australian Summer 20km championship in February (1:26:49), came 3<sup>rd</sup> again in the Australian 10,000m walk in March (41:17), came 57<sup>th</sup> in the IAAF World Cup 20km in May (PB 1:23:58), won the Open 10 Mile at the LBG carnival in June (1:12:20) and finished his year with a solid 4 days of racing in the Lake Taihu Rally in China in October.</p>
	<p><b>8. Adam Rutter (NSW)</b>  Having not been seen since the London Olympics, 28 year old Adam Rutter dipped his feet back into competitive racewalking in February with 4<sup>th</sup> place in the Australian Summer 20km roadwalk championship (1:27:31), improved to 1:25:11 in Nomi, Japan, in March and improved further in the World Cup in May, finishing 64<sup>th</sup> with 1:24:44. A solid third place in the LBG 20 Mile classic in June (2:32:53), a win in the NSW 30km championship in July (2:21:31) and some solid racing in the Lake Taihu 4 Day race in China in October (with 9<sup>th</sup> on Day 4) capped off a good comeback year. Hopefully 2015 will see further improvement as he works his way back towards his form of old.</p>
	<p><b>E9. Corey Dickson (VIC)</b>  12 year old Corey Dickson seems untouchable at the moment in the U14 age group and is putting together some excellent times and performances. Started the year with a win in the U14 3000m at the Australian T&amp;F Champs in March (15:16), followed up with wins in both the U12 2km (9:47) and the U14 2km (an even faster 9:27) at the LBG Carnival in June, and knocked out PBs of 14:28 (3km), 25:35 (5km) and 53:56 (10km). Not bad for someone who was 11 at the time! Did not contest the other major championships but did enough to justify his place on this list.</p>
	<p><b>E9. Declan Tingay (WA)</b>  15 year old Declan Tingay was the best in his U16 age group, Australia wide. He won the U16 3000m (13:05) and took 2<sup>nd</sup> in the U18 5000m (22:51) at the Australian Junior T&amp;F Champs in March, won the U16 5km at the Australian Roadwalks champs in August (25:02) and medalled in good double at the Australian All-Schools T&amp;F Champs in December (1<sup>st</sup> in the U16 3000m with 13:19 and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the U18 5000m with 23:16).</p>
	<p><b>10. Adam Garganis (VIC)</b>  17 year old Adam Garganis is another very talented junior male walker. He signalled his intentions with 4<sup>th</sup> in the World Cup trail in Hobart in Feb (46:19), won the U18 5000m (22:32) and was 4<sup>th</sup> again in the U20 10,000m (46:04) at the Australian Junior T&amp;F Champs in March, had a huge triple at the LBG Carnival in June (4<sup>th</sup> in the Open 10 Mile with 1:13:56, 2<sup>nd</sup> in the U20 10km with 49:57 and 4<sup>th</sup> in the U18 5km with 23:28) and finally took 2<sup>nd</sup> in the U18 5000m at the Australian All Schools in Dec (22:54).</p>