

TIM'S TOP TEN MEN FOR 2015

It's that time of the year again so off we go with my Top Ten Men for 2015 and, as always, I find it impossible to stop at 10! 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.



1. Jared Tallent (SA)

With a silver medal in the 2015 IAAF World Championship 50km in August (3:42:17), 31 year old Jared Tallent deservedly takes top billing in my yearly list. This, combined with his 6th place in the 2014 IAAF Race Walking Challenge Series, continues his many years of ongoing excellence. Although his year was a relatively quiet one by his standards, he did race locally on a couple of occasions, winning the Australian Summer 20km Roadwalk Championship in Adelaide in February (1:24:05) and being the first Australian to finish in the LBG 20 Mile championship in Canberra in June (2:23:02). A consummate athlete who is able to peak at the right time for the major races each and every year.



2. Dane Bird-Smith (QLD)

23 year old Dane Bird-Smith consolidated his place amongst the top 20km walkers in the world this year. The main highlight had to be his win in the World University Games in Sth Korea in July (1:21:30) but it was one of many highlights. He won the Australian 10,000m track walk championship in March in 39:53, was 5th in the IAAF Challenge Series race in Taicang in May (1:22:10), 5th again in La Coruna in June (a PB 1:20:05), and came a career best 8th in the IAAF World Championship 20km in August in Beijing (1:21:37). He finished off his year with a superb series of races in the annual 4 Day Lake Taihu Tour in China in October, finishing a close second overall after placings of 4th, 1st, 3rd and 1st. Definitely a medal chance for Rio next year and the obvious successor to Jared Tallent as the top Aussie walker.



3. Chris Erickson (VIC)

34 year old Chris Erickson had an excellent year with PBs over 5000m (19:23.72) and 20km (1:22:08) and his highest ever World Championship finish with 13th in the 50km (3:51:26). Was in good form early with 2nd in the Australian Summer 20km in Adelaide (1:25:42), won the Victorian 5000m (19:23), came 10th in Nomi, Japan, in March (1:22:08), cleaned up locally with most of the Victorian roadwalk championships, all in good times, then did the double at the IAAF World Championships (32nd in the 20km in 1:25:15 and 13th in the 50km in 3:51:26). Finished the year with a win in the Australian 50km championship at Fawkner Park in December (3:54:10), thus confirming his third successive Olympic walks berth. A walker who just gets better with age.



E4. Tyler Jones (NSW)

17 year old Tyler Jones and 16 year old Kyle Swan have dominated the U20 division and had a wonderful year of shared battles. Being a year older, Tyler had the edge on most occasions but I rate them alongside each other overall. Tyler started the year superbly with a win in the Adelaide 10km in Feb (44:08), followed by wins in the Australian T&F U18 5000m (21:44.26) and U20 10000m (43:24.55) in March. He then won the LBG U18 5km in June (21:58) and looked set for a great World Youths competition, only to suffer the disappointment of a DNF in Cali in July. Bypassing major comps for the next few months, he bounced back with a win in the U20 10km at Fawkner Park a week ago in a PB 42:48.



E4. Kyle Swan (VIC)

16 year old Kyle Swan and 17 year old Tyler Jones have dominated the U20 division and had a wonderful year of shared battles. Being a year older, Tyler had the edge on most occasions but I rate them alongside each other overall. Kyle started his year with 2nd in the Adelaide U20 10km in February (21:10) and 2nds in the Australian T&F U18 5000m (22:07.15) and U20 10,000m (43:50.85) in March. He doubled well in the LBG Carnival in June, winning the U20 10km (43:38) and coming 2nd in the U18 5km (23:56). Like Tyler, he was disappointed in the World Youths in Cali, suffering an early Pit Lane outage and then never really recovering, eventually finishing 33rd in 50:42. He bounced back well, winning the Australian U18 10km in August (45:10) and the Australian All-Schools U18 5000m in December (2:-59.59). His final walk for the year was last week at Fawkner Park when he finished just behind Tyler in the U20 10km with a PB 43:01. A superb year by any measure.



E6. Rhydian Cowley (VIC)

24 year old Rhydian Cowley had a very solid year, starting with a bronze in the Australian Summer 20km championship in Adelaide in February (1:28:06). He backed up a month later with 2nd in the Australian 10,000m track championship (42:29), followed by a couple of IAAF Challenge Series races (Taicang 20km - 12th in 1:26:24, La Coruna 20km – PB 1:23:27). A World University Games 12th place (1:28:12) in July in Sth Korea and then second in the Australian 20km road championship in August (1:27:16) set him up nicely fitness wise for a month at the AIS in November. He came off that with a 10,000m track walk of 41:07, followed by a fine 20km time of 1:24:35 at Fawkner Park last week. Looks set for a big 2016.



E6. Brendon Reading (ACT)

26 year old Brendon Reading started the year slowly and did not hit his straps until the LBG 20 miler in June (4th in 2:33:30). But his year all came together with a couple of great walks after a month training at the AIS in November – a PB 41:31 for 10,000m track followed by a 29 minute PB of 3:55:03 to take silver in the Australian 50km championship in December at Fawkner Park, thus catapulting himself into a very good position re Olympic selection next year.



8. Ian Rayson (NSW)

25 year old Ian Rayson did not race until the LBG Carnival in June (3rd in the 20 mile championship in 2:27:49). But from then on, his racing was impressive. He won the Australian 20km roadwalk championship in August (1:25:46) and recorded a 2 minute PB in the Australian 50km in December (3:55:17) in finishing as the third Australian. With a solid Olympic 50km qualifier under his belt, he is well positioned for 2016.



9. Adam Garganis (VIC)

18 year old Adam Garganis had an amazing 36 races during 2015 and quite a lot of them resulted in PBs. Such is the depth of our U20 boys division that a time of 44:50.23 could only manage 5th in the Australian T&F Champs U20 10,000m walk in March but it was the start of a great year for him. He won the LBG 10 Mile championship in 1:12:52 in June, won the Victorian 20km Open Championship a couple of weeks later in a PB 1:31:08, took second in the Victorian 10km and 15km championships, was 2nd in the U20 10km at the Australian roadwalks championships in August (45:39) and just a week ago improved his 10km to 44:03 with a great walk at Fawkner Park in Melbourne. Adam has a big engine and the longer distances do not phase him. A great year!



E10. Dylan Richardson (NSW)

15 year old Dylan Richardson has been consistently our top U16 walker in Australia. He won the Australian T&F Champs U16 3000m in March (13:54.17), won the U16 3km at the LBG Carnival in June (14:02) and was 2nd in the U16 5km at the Australian Roadwalk Champs in August (24:27). He also knocked out his first 10,000m track race, recording 49:44.34 as a 14 year old.



E10. Declan Tingay (WA)

16 year old Declan Tingay has done it on his own in Western Australia but that has not stopped him taking it right up to his east coast rivals. In the Australian T&F championships in March, he won the U17 5000m (21:35.85) and was 3rd in the U20 10,000m (44:19.89). His only other national races saw him take 2nd in the Australian All-Schools U18 5000m in Dec (21:08.81) and 4th in the U20 10km at Fawkner Park a week later in 44.14. He has done PBs throughout the year but his opportunities to race nationally have been few, given the geographic isolation of Perth. Definitely an exciting young prospect.



E10. Corey Dickson (VIC)

13 year old Corey Dickson has had some major battles with SA walker Joe Cross in the U14 division but I give the nod to Corey overall, although little separates the two boys. Although suffering a DQ at the Australian T&F Champs U14 3000m in March, his LBG Carnival in June saw him 1st in the U14 2km (9:12), 3rd in the U16 3km (14:48) and 5th in the U18 5km (26:09). This was followed by 2nd in the Australian Roadwalk champs U14 3km (14:25) in August. Finally, he wrapped up his year with a win in an exciting contest in the Australian All-Schools U14 3000m in December (14:04.21).



E10. George White (SA)

70 year old George White has been amongst our top masters walkers for many years now but this has been perhaps his finest ever year. A regular competitor with the South Australian Masters in Adelaide who never ceases to amaze me with his superb times (always in the 90+% age graded area), he celebrated entering the M70 division in June with 2 golds and a silver in the World Masters Championships in Lyon (2nd 5000m 29:03.06, 1st 10km 59:16 and 1st 20km 2:08:02).