

## TIM'S TOP TEN MEN FOR 2016

It's that time of the year again so off we go with my Top Ten Men for 2016. 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 always, it was a very tough task.



### 1. Jared Tallent (SA)

For what I think is the 9<sup>th</sup> year in a row, 32 year old Jared Tallent is my male Australian Walker of the Year. You just can't go past gold in the World Racewalking Team Championships 50km in Rome in May (3:42:46) and silver in the Olympic 50km in Rio (3:41:16). To top it off, Jared finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 2016 IAAF World Racewalking Challenge Series. A very selective racer but always at his peak when it counts.



### 2. Dane Bird-Smith (QLD)

24 year old Dane Bird-Smith had another stellar year that would have seen him top the rankings in just about any country in the world except for here. He set a new Australian record for the 5000m track (18:38.97), won the Australian 10,000m track championship (38:44.61) and the summer 20km roadwalk championship (1:20:04) before taking 4<sup>th</sup> place in the World Racewalking Team Championships 20km in Rome (1:19:38) and bronze in the Olympic 20km in Rio (1:19:37). He then capped his year with two seconds and two firsts to win overall in the 4 Day Lake Taihi Challenge in China. Finally, he finished 5<sup>th</sup> in the 2016 IAAF World Racewalking Challenge Series, a reflection on his great year overall.



### 3. Chris Erickson (VIC)

35 year old Chris Erickson raced sparingly but, like Jared, produced it when it counted. Wins in the Victorian 10km (41:03) and 20km championships and his first ever win in the LBG 20 Mile Championship in his 13<sup>th</sup> start (a PB 2:19:51) capped off a good warmup for the Olympics. In Rio, he walked his finest ever race, coming 10<sup>th</sup> in the 50km with a PB 3:48:40, showing that he is still improving at 35 years of age.



#### 4. Rhydian Cowley (VIC)

25 year old Rhydian Cowley forced his way into the Olympic team with a PB 1:22:07 in the Australian Summer 20km Championship in Adelaide in February. Some fast 5000m track races (19:43.53 and 19:26.76) followed as his final warmup before the World Racewalking Team Championships in Rome (39<sup>th</sup> in 1:23:21). He then backed this up with another good race in the Rio Olympics (33<sup>rd</sup> in 1:23:30).



#### 5. Tyler Jones (NSW)

18 year old Tyler Jones started his year with a PB win (42:22) in the Oceania U20 10km walk at the Australian Summer 20km Championships in Adelaide in February. An unfortunate disqualification in the Australian U20 10000m track championship in Perth in March put him in a difficult position re selections but he bounced back with silver in the Australian Open 10,000m championship in Sydney in April (43:39). He raced to 40<sup>th</sup> place (45:40) in the World Teams Champs in May in Rome but bounced back with 2 excellent races in the LBG Carnival in Canberra in June - 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Open 10 Miles with 1:10:30 and gold in the U20 10km with 45:05. Everything came together for a superb race in the World Junior Championships in Poland in July (a PB 42:02.96 for 10<sup>th</sup> in the U20 10,000m walk). He won the Australian U20 10km championship in August in Canberra (44:44) and capped off an excellent year with his first ever 20km in December, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at Fawkner Park in Melbourne with 1:30:12.



#### 6. Adam Garganis (VIC)

19 year old Adam Garganis was one of our hardest working walkers for the year, amassing 42 races in total. But it was not a case of quantity only as the quality was there for all to see. A series of excellent races last summer (3<sup>rd</sup> in the Oceania U20 10km with 42:53, 5000m times of 21:25, 21:35 and 21:25 and a win in the Australian U20 10,000m championship (43:13.24) earned him spots in the Australian teams for the World Teams Championships and the World Junior Championships. He rose to the challenge in the World Teams Championships in Rome in May, finishing 14<sup>th</sup> in a PB 42:24. A superb win the LBG Carnival Open 10 Miles (a PB and course record of 1:09:51) was followed by a PB 42:22.96 for 16<sup>th</sup> in the World Junior Championships in Poland. He rounded off his winter with his first ever senior title, winning the Australian Winter 20km championship in Canberra in August (1:34:23). All in all, a great year.



### **7. Declan Tingay (WA)**

17 year old Declan Tingay started off the year strongly with gold in the Australian U18 5000m Championship (PB 20:43.45) and silver in the Australian U20 10,000m Championship (44:10.11) in March in Perth. He then disappeared to complete his final year of secondary school, reappearing in October and quickly building back into top racing form. He finished off his year much as he had started it, with a wonderful December which included a PB win in the Australian Schools U18 5000m championship (20:11.80) along with two Australian U18 best performances – 10km in 42:36 and 3000m in 11:40.32.



### **8. Kyle Swan (VIC)**

17 year old Kyle Swan started his year with two very important second places. In February, he was second in the Oceania U20 10km walk at the Australian Summer 20km Championships in Adelaide (PB 42:48), thus cementing a spot in the World Racewalking Teams Championships team. He then took silver behind Declan Tingay in the Australian U18 5000m Championship (PB 20:51.32) in Perth in March. He followed this up with 32<sup>nd</sup> (44:07) in the World Teams Champs in May in Rome. He did a big double at the LBG carnival in June, taking bronze in the Open 10 Miles (1:15:35) and winning the U18 5km (23:00). He finished his winter with a win in the Australian U18 10km road championship (45:44) in August in Canberra. He finished his year with a fine second to Declan Tingay in the Australian Schools U18 5000m in December in Canberra (22:00.76).



### **9. Andrew Jamieson (VIC)**

70 year old Andrew Jamieson continues to lead the way amongst our masters walkers. Graduating to the M70-74 age category in June of this year, he has wasted no time in making his presence felt, setting new records for 5000m (26:42.1), 10km (53:17) and 20km (1:57:55). He also won gold in all three M70 events at the World Masters Championships in Perth in October – 5000m (26:42), 10km (53:37) and 20km (2:01:29). Andrew continues to amaze with times that would do credit to our younger walkers.



#### **10. Brendon Reading (ACT)**

27 year old Brendon Reading has to be in the top 10 mix, given his selection in the Rio Olympic 50km, yet overall it was not amongst his best years. A niggling injury hampered his walk in the World Teams Championships 20km in Rome in May and he could only manage 94<sup>th</sup> with 1:32:32. His Olympic 50km was also done on a less than optimal preparation as he struggled to 50<sup>th</sup> in the 50km with 4:13:02. But over the last few months, he seems to have returned to more consistent form, clocking up fast track times for 1500m (5:53), 3000m (12:16) and 5000m (22:50).

It was tough to rank the men this year as so little separated them. I also reviewed a number of other walkers such as **Dylan Richardson** (NSW), **Connor Frew** (ACT), **Mitchell Baker** (ACT) and **Nikola Mandic** (VIC) but felt the others pipped them for spots in the top ten.