

TIM'S TOP TEN MEN FOR 2017

It's that time of the year again so off we go with my Top Ten Men for 2017. For the first time since I started producing my annual Top Ten, two names are missing. Jared Tallent had a very quiet year with only 2 finishes and no major championship races. Chris Erickson, having announced his post-Olympic retirement, raced only a few low key AV Shield track races. But their absence opened the door for new names in 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. Dane Bird-Smith (QLD)

25 year old Dane has dominated the Australian walking scene this year, with a series of sterling performances. My Walker of the Week on 4 occasions, his plaudits included wins in the Australian Summer 20km championship (1:19:37) and the Australian 10,000m track championship (38:44.61), 6th place in the IAAF World Championships 20km in London (1:19:28) and a comprehensive win in the 4 Day Lake Taihu Rally in China. His yearly best times were 10:54.70 (3000m), 38:44.61 (10,000m) and 1:19:28 (20km).



2. Tyler Jones (NSW)

19 year old Tyler has had a great year, dominating the NSW walking scene and transitioned seamlessly into senior ranks on the national level. He walked a PB 1:27:12 in finishing as 4th Australian in the Australian Summer 20km Championship in February. He finished 3rd in the Australian Open 10,000m track walk in March in a PB 42:01.39. He walked an excellent double in the LBG carnival in June, winning the 10 Mile with 1:12:27 and backing up shortly afterwards to win the U20 10km with 45:14. Finally he finished 2nd in the Australian Winter 20km Championship in August (1:27:07) and 2nd in the Fawkner Park 20km in December (a PB 1:26:44).



3. Declan Tingay (WA)

18 year old Declan started his year with wins in the Oceania U20 10km Roadwalk Championship (42:35) and the Australian U20 10,000m Championship (42:09.52). From his base in Perth, he walked a series of fast solo times during the winter, culminating in an inaugural 1:29:18 in the WA State 20km Championship, followed by 2nd in the Australian 20km Winter Championship (1:28:10). He also competed in the Lake Taihu 4 Day Rally in China, finishing all 4 stages with solid performances. He finished his year with a win in the U20 10km at Fawkner Park (a PB 42:02). Definitely our top U20 male walker and a youngster who can already mix it with our best open walkers.



4. Rhydian Cowley (VIC)

26 year old Rhydian started the year in fine style with 1:22:09 in the Australian 20km Summer Championship (second Australian), 2nd place in the Australian 10,000m track championship (41:35.60) and a win in the Victorian 5000m track championship (20:48.16). Wins in the Victorian 10km, 15km and 20km championships set him up nicely for his race in the IAAF World Championships in London but his walk there was personally disappointing (56th with 1:30:40). But he remains clearly our number two Australian male 20km walker and is well placed to bounce back in the new year.



5. Adam Garganis (VIC)

20 year old Adam Garganis has steadily improved over the last few years, with 2017 continuing that trend. He started the year with a PB 1:27:27 in the Australian Summer 20km Championship (5th Australian) and then took 5th in the Australian 10,000m Track Championship with 43:10.27. After second placings to Rhydian Cowley in the Victorian 10km, 15km and 20km championships during the winter, he has won gold in the 30km championship with a 6+ minute PB time of 2:17:24 - almost certainly the fastest ever 30km by an Australian U20 walker. He finished off his year with 3rd in the Fawkner Park 20km in December (1:28:16).



6. Kyle Swan (VIC)

18 year old Kyle started the year in fine form, with silvers in the Oceania U20 10km Roadwalk Championship (43:56) and the Australian U20 10,000m Track Championship (43:21.42) and fourth in the Australian Open 10,000m Track Championship (PB 42:47.31). After that, it was a case of nose to the grindstone as he completed his all important Year 12 studies. To his credit, he continued to race on the local Victorian front and kept his fitness with a series of high ranking U20 walks. He celebrated the completion of his academic year with second place in the Fawkner Park 10km in December (44:58). He is now well placed to return to his best form as 2018 unfolds.



7. Mitchell Baker (ACT)

16 year old Mitchell Baker was one of a number of outstanding young walkers from Canberra. 43 races for the year is pretty good, especially when so many of them are high quality. He started the year with silver in the U17 5000m walk at the Australian T&F Championship in March (23:41.26). He then scored an impressive double in the LBG Carnival in Canberra in June with golds in U16 3km (13:15) and the U18 5km (23:15). He took bronze in the U18 5km at the Australian Roadwalk Championships in August (47:52). He finished his year with gold in the Australian Schools U18 5000m (22:12.26) and a 10km PB of 46:45 a week later in Canberra. Mitchell seems poised to challenge our top U20 walkers in 2018.



8. Toby Wilks (SA)

12 year old Toby has had a great year. He started with a win in the Australian U14 3000m Championship (14:07.70) in March. His triple at the LBG Carnival in Canberra in June (1st in the U12 2km in 9:47, 1st in the U14 2km in 9:28 and 10th in the U18 5km (26:10) was outstanding. He then opted to walk in the U18 5000m in the Australian Schools T&F Championships in December, finishing 7th in 25:10.91. Pretty impressive for someone who only turned 12 in October.



9. Brendon Reading (ACT)

28 year old Brendon was the third Australian to finish in the Australian 20km Summer Championship in March (1:24:37). He came 2nd in the LBG 10 Mile Championship in June (1:13:12) and was 3rd in the Australian winter 20km championship in August (1:27:13). A quiet year but enough to make my top 10.



10. Robin Whyte (ACT)

75 year old Robin Whyte gets my pick as our best Male Masters walker for 2017. A great supporter of the ACTRWC in Canberra, he raced an impressive 41 times this year in regular competition over all distances, but it was the longer distances that he excelled. Turning 75, he set new Australian age records for 6 Hours (49.406km), 50 Miles (10:55:16) and 12 Hours (85.997km) in March and April. Then at the LBG Carnival in June, he finished the gruelling 20 Miles Championship for the 49th time in 51 years, coming 5th with 3:38:16. A wonderful example of longevity and ongoing quality of performance.