

AUSTRALIAN WALKERS AND THE 1952 OLYMPIC GAMES

The 1952 Olympic Games was to feature 2 racewalks - a 10,000m track walk and a 50km road walk. While there were plenty of contenders for the 10,000m walk, the pickings were sparse from a 50km perspective. In fact, Australia at that time did not even have a 50km Australian Championship and it was up to each State to conduct its own State Championship. The state of play can be reviewed by looking at the first two placings at the post-WWII Victorian 50km championships. With the exception of the 1948 results, there had been no performances under 5 hours.

Victorian 50km Championships, post WWII

1946	Reid, Alan	Footscray	5.08.39	Theobold, Gus	Glenhuntly	5.18.42
1947	Reid, Alan	Footscray	5.03.50	Behan, William	NSW	5.09.48
1948	Behan, William	NSW	4.53.53	Theobold, Gus	Glenhuntly	5.03.46
1949	Theobold, Gus	Glenhuntly	5.16.12	Tarte, Reginald	NSW	5.19.37
1950	Chadwick, Leonard	VAWC	5.08.45	Theobold, Gus	Glenhuntly	5.17.24
1951	Chadwick, Leonard	VAWC	5.09.28	Hellyer, Leslie	Brunswick	5.19.46

With the 1952 Olympics in the offing and with walkers in need of qualifying opportunities, the Victorian Amateur Walkers' Club decided to conduct its own pre-Olympic opportunities, scheduling a 50km road walk on Saturday 15th December 1951 at Albert Park. The event, sanctioned by the Victorian Amateur Athletic Association, started at 7:30AM and fingers were crossed that it would not be a torrid summer day. Luck was with the Victorians, with fine cool conditions greeting the walkers at the start line and rain falling for nearly 2 hours from the 6 miles to the 16 miles marks. Final results read as follows

VAWC Pre-Olympic 50km Trial, Sat 15 Dec 1951

1.	Len Chadwick	VAWC	5:03:21
2.	Gordon Doak	St Marks A.A.C	5:07:10
3.	W. Knott	Sth Melbourne A.A.C.	Retired
4.	John Busst	Collingwood A.A.C.	Retired
5.	Les Hellyer	Brunswick A.A.C	Retired

Young Gordon Doak put in an excellent performance in finishing 2nd, only 600yds behind the current Victorian champion Len Chadwick. His time of 5:07:10 was outstanding for an Australian junior at that time and was only 12 minutes outside the Olympic standard of 4:55:00 that had been set by the Australian Amateur Athletic Assn. He had come off a stellar winter season which saw a whole swag of wins and places in VAWC races and saw him win the overall style award for the season. In fact, VAAA judge, Bert Gardiner had declared that Doak "has a walking style which could not be bettered".

A 10,000m Pre-Olympics track walk trial was also held that day for Victorian potentials, kicking off at the Olympic Park in Melbourne at 5:45PM. Conditions were still unusually cool with the race report describing the weather as "fine, cold wind, heavy gusts at time".

VAWC Pre-Olympic 10,000m Trial, Sat 15 Dec 1951

1.	Ted Allsopp	Williamstown A.A.C	46:54.2
2.	Ray Smith	Coburg A.A.C.	47:45
3.	A Malpass	Williamstown A.A.C.	48:11
4.	Ernie Ryall	Coburg A.A.C.	49:40
5.	J Matthews	Footscray A.A.C.	54:59

Further 10,000m trials were put on for the Victorians by VAWC, first at the Olympic Park on 5th January 1952 (won by A. Malpass in 47:34) and then at Malvern Cricket Ground on 22nd January 1952 (won by Ted Allsopp with 46:31).

The official 50km Olympic trial was held on Saturday 2nd February 1952 in Melbourne, starting just after 11AM at Olympic Park. This was designated as the first ever Australian 50km Championship and from then on, an Australian 50km championship would be scheduled every even year. The course saw walkers complete 2 laps of the track before proceeding along Batman Ave, Sturt St and Moray St to Albert Park, where they completed 7 laps of the lake before returning the same way to Olympic Park and completing a final 3 laps on the track. The weather was fine and sunny at the start and remained that way throughout the day, the temperature increasing as the race progressed and the torrid conditions taking an obvious toll on the field, only 3 of the 11 starters actually finishing.

Chadwick walked heroically, finishing over 30 minutes ahead of second placed Medcalf, but well outside the required 4:55:00. Doak put in another creditable performance in gaining third place but was badly effected in the heat, finishing in a very slow 5:50:14. Sadly, he effectively retired from serious racewalking at that stage and turned to his other love

of weight lifting. It was a case of waiting another 4 years for the next Olympics or getting on with his life.

50km Olympic Road Walk Trial and Australian Championship, Saturday 2nd February 1952

1.	Len Chadwick	VIC	5:10:58
2.	W. Medcalf	NSW	5:44:22
3.	Gordon Doak	VIC	5:50:14
	D Waters	WA	Retired at 20 Miles
	W. Knott	VIC	Retired at 18 Miles
	Cliff Barling	VIC	Retired at 18 Miles
	W. Behan	NSW	Retired at 17 Miles
	G. Kenyon	NSW	Retired at 17 Miles
	R. Tarts	NSW	Retired at 14 Miles
	Tom Daintry	QLD	Retired at 11 Miles
	Les Hellyer	VIC	Disqualified at 14 Miles

The official 10,000m track walk Olympic trial was also held that same day at Olympic Park in Melbourne, with a 5PM start time. Conditions were described as fine, sunny and hot – a classic example of understatement for what was a very hot Melbourne summer's day.

Victorian Ted Allsopp had entered the trial as the clear favourite, having dominated the Australian scene for the previous 2 years. He had won the Victorian 10 km (45:56) and the Australian 10 km (46:55) in 1951 and confirmed his form with leadup 10,000m track walks of 47:15 (1 Dec 1951), 46:54 (15 Dec 1951) and 46:31 (22 Jan 1952). But come the final trial, it was the young WA speedster Don Keane who upset his plans and won with a time of 46:11. Allsopp was second in 47:16 and certainly deserved selection but somewhat controversially only Keane was named in the team for Helsinki.

10,000m Olympic Track Walk Trial, Saturday 2nd February 1952

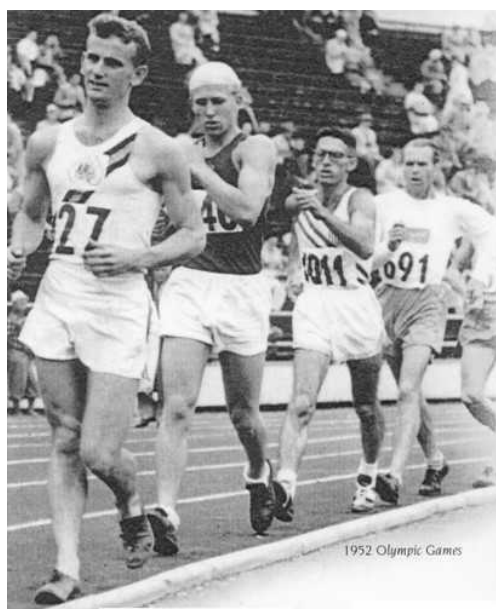
1.	Don Keane	WA	46:11.8
2.	Ted Allsopp	VIC	47:16.4
3.	A. Malpass	VIC	49:36
4.	E. Edwards	NSW	51:07
5.	John McDougall	NSW	52:15
6.	J. Freeman	VIC	54:00
7.	J. Matthews	VIC	56:24
8.	John Smythe	SA	59:51
	Ray Smith	VIC	Retired
	A. Monnery	VIC	Retired
	R. Gratton	VIC	Retired
	George Nevitt	VIC	Retired
	Ernie Ryall	VIC	Disqualified

For Keane, it was a meteoric rise to the top. In his first year as a senior, he had astounded all by winning the 1950 Australian Track Championship in Adelaide, beating Athol Stubbs by 6 inches with a new Australian record of 13:43. Stubbs had won 3 of the last 4 Australian Track Championships and was considered unbeatable at that stage. Keane would go on to win another six titles over that distance (1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1957 and 1958) and represent Australia at the 1956 Olympics as well.

So, at only 21 years of age, Don Keane was our only Olympic walker in the 1952 Olympics. He led the first heat through the 5000m mark in 22:26 before settling back and finishing 5th (46:55) to ensure his place in the final. There he recorded 10th place(47:37).

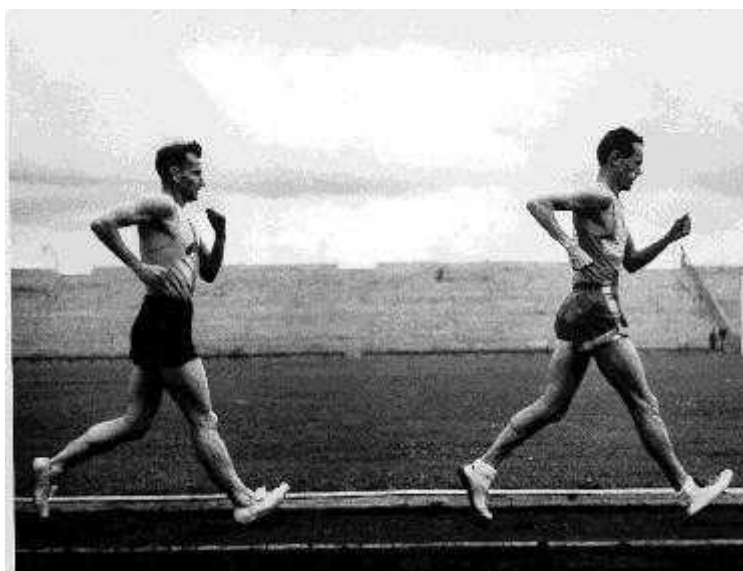
1952 Olympic 10,000m Track Walk, 27 July 1952

1.	John MIKAELSSON	SWE	45.02.8	OR
2.	Fritz SCHWAB	SWI	45.41.0	
3.	Bruno JUNK	EST	45.41.0	
4.	Louis CHEVALIER	FRA	45.50.4	
5.	George COLEMAN	GBR	46.06.8	
6.	Ivan YARMYSH	UKR	46.07.0	
7.	Emile MAGGI	FRA	46.08.0	
8.	Bruno FAIT	ITA	46.25.6	
9.	Gabriel REYMOND	SUI	46.38.6	
10.	Don KEANE	AUS	47.47.0	



Taken in the early stages of the first heat in the 1952 Olympic 10,000m track walk, the photo shows Don (number 27) in front of Bruno Junk (USSR), Henry Lasko (USA), John Michaelson (SWE) and Chevalier (FRA).

As for Allsopp, he put his disappointment aside, racing through the 1952 winter season with wins in the Victorian 10km (45:38) and the Victorian 10 miles (78:39) and the Australian 10km roadwalk (46:08) – his third win in a row in this event. For the records, he did subsequently represent Australia at the 1956, 1960 and 1964 Olympic Games.



And one final photo, showing Ted Allsopp leading Don Keane in one of their many classic encounters. Two superb walk technicians in action.