

The Swedish and indeed the global race-walking community lost one of its own late last week, when the sad news spread of the passing of multiple Swedish representative, **Anders Hansson**, in small hours on Friday 30th October at just 28 years of age.

Anders started his walking career at a very early age, but in the beginning and up to his teens, it was football (soccer) that was his sporting passion. Born in Borås, and with a father highly enthusiastic for sport, Anders found his love in being active and supporting football and his great local team of Elfsborg from an early age.

Growing older, Anders realised he had more talent for walking, hence in 2009, at the age of seventeen, he made the difficult decision to follow in his father's footsteps and dedicate his life to heel and toe, despite being selected for the junior representative team, Elfsborg, in football. Later the same year, he was rewarded for this decision, when selected to represent Sweden for the first time in the World Youth Championships in Bressanone, Italy. There he finished 18th with 47:53.18. He later qualified for the European Junior Championships in Tallinn, Estonia 2011 after he improved his 10km PB to 44:26 that year.

His first Swedish national title came during the winter of 2014, winning the Indoor 5000m Race Walk in Växjö, but his breakthrough came with another title at the autumn 50km Nationals in Eskilstuna, when he recorded a PB in 4:06:31. This title had come at just 22 years of age and with limited preparation and background in training. Anders then had determined that the 50km walk was to be his main discipline. In 2015 Anders walked a fine 4:03:20 at the European Cup in Murcia, Spain, and with that result secured his selection for the 2015 World Championship Beijing, China. This was the senior debut at a global competition for Anders, but unfortunately, he had to withdraw around the mid-way mark.



Anders during his first Global Championships in Beijing, China 2015

In the spring of 2016, his improvement continued with another PB of 4:01:23, despite the altitude of Ciudad Juárez, in Mexico. Unlike Australia's inclusive selection policy, Swedish walkers, to gain selection for an Olympic games, had to exceed the then IAAF Standards, and in the 50km walk, they were asking for a time of 3:45:00, which was beyond the reach of all Swedish walkers in 2016.

At the European Cup in Podebrady 2017, he broke the 4 hour barrier for the first time, finishing 13th with a 3:58:42 to qualify for his 2nd consecutive World Champs. While preparing in St Moritz for the 2017 London World Championships, Anders joined the international walkers who have always worked together at training camps to improve the training environment for all. Anders along with his Swedish teammates, trained solidly with the likes of Regan Lambie (AUS), Quentin Rew (NZL), and Alana Barber (NZL), and Evan Dunfee (CAN). This environment certainly paid off for Anders, as he was rewarded with a fine walk in London to finish 28th with a PB of 3:58:00.

Anders in 2018, followed what has been successful formula for Swedish walkers, and travelled to Australia to swap the harsh Swedish winter for the warmth and great training in Canberra at the 2018 Supernova Training camp. Anders

competed at both the Australian 10,000m Championships, and the 20km Australian and Oceania Championships in 2018.

2018 would prove to be a difficult racing year due to what Anders called “bad luck”. He was in great 20km shape early on, but unfortunately was sick the week leading into the Oceania 20km Race Walk Championships in Adelaide, in February. Despite suffering the effects of a cold, he still a new PB at the 20km, with a time 1:25:51. In the European Champs in Berlin, the 50km saw the hottest day of the Championships with scorching sun and temperatures well above 30 degrees Celsius. Thanks to a good preparation leading up, Anders posted a credible 4:11:36 for 23rd. To complete his 2018 season, he won his 2nd National 50km title.

In total, Anders won 6 Gold, 13 Silver and 10 bronze medals at the Swedish championships. 5 straight starts in the prestigious Finnkampen, with 2 times 3rd as his best result. 50km was battled out a total of 11 times between the years of 2013 – 2018.



BBQ Lunch at St Moritz 2017: L to R (Bethan Davies, Alana Barber, Ben Thorne, Evan Dunfee, Josh Harris (AUS Marathon), Perseus Karlstrom, Anders Hansson)



2018 Australian 20km in Adelaide - Anders (far left) and other Supernova walkers relax post race

Anders was an extremely goal oriented person, no matter the task at hand. During his engineering studies at Lunds University, he spent his 4th year as an expat at the University of California Santa Barbara, USA. He was as methodological with his studies as with his training and finished his Master of Science in Engineering – Engineering Physics, the most prestigious engineering degree in Sweden, in an outstanding 5 years, a task only a few managed to do! He was a true role model both on and off the track!

In December 2018, during a family dinner, Anders suffered an epileptic seizure. This was followed by another, in January 2019. Doctors discovered, and then surgically removed a tumour in his brain. After a successful surgery, Anders started his cancer treatment, and the prognosis at the time was certainly very positive, mostly due to his excellent athletic shape. Anders never stopped exercising and was still able to participate in the national championships in 2019, representing Sweden one last time in the annual Finland-Sweden Athletics International match in Stockholm in the autumn. He was then about to finish his treatment and very hopeful for the future! In February 2020, he won the Swedish national 5000m indoor title which would come to be his last competition.

Early in the summer of 2020, his medical team discovered a new tumour and following surgery, another one hidden beneath. This last one was deemed inoperable and untreatable. Anders fought a hard battle for a couple of months until his body no longer could cope.

Let's hope you'll soon be able to stride out a new 50km race walk wherever you are Anders!

Perseus Karlstrom

Anders Hansson – Personal Bests

10,000m Track Walk	41:52.6	Boras (SWE)	07 JUL 2017	1051
20 Km Road Walk	1:25:51	Adelaide (AUS)	11 FEB 2018	1068
50 Km Roads Walk	3:58:00	Olympic Stadium, London (GBR)	13 AUG 2017	1115



Team shoot before the World Team Champs in Taicang, China 2018: L to R : Ato Alm Ibáñez, Perseus Karlström, Anders Hansson