

**** 2024 WALKER OF THE YEAR ****



1. JEMIMA MONTAG (VIC)

An outstanding year for Jemima, in which her steady climb through the top 10 rankings culminated in 2024 Olympic podium honours and confirmed her status as one of the world's premier walkers. Following on from her silver medal in 2023's World Championships in Budapest, that status is indisputable and, barring anything untoward, should endure for some years yet. Congratulations, Jemima!

Best performances

- Dual Olympic bronze medallist – 20km, 1:26:25 (Aust. All comers, Oceania, Commonwealth records; Marathon Walk Relay: 10.8km 45:51 (changed 1st place), 10km 42:27 (finished 3rd))
- 2nd, Korzienowski Warsaw Race Walking Cup 20km, 1:27.56
- Aust & Oceania 20km champion, 1:27:09 (Aust., Oceania & Commonwealth records)

2. ISAAC BEACROFT (NSW)

In May, the 17yo arrived on the world stage like a hammer blow, winning the World Teams U20 10km in Antalya (TUR) with a paralysing burst of speed we in Australia have come to expect of him but for which his Antalya opposition were completely unprepared – least of all his Chinese co-medallists. Isaac backed up this performance with a solid 4th place in the World U20 titles in Lima, in a time 20secs faster than his Antalya result. Sneaking through between these was a 15km clocking on Mt Stromlo Park's undulating bike circuit that would have equated to an 88:00 20km – at age 17. What a future beckons!

Best performances

- Gold medallist, WA Race walking Teams c'ship U20 10km, 39:56 (Aust U20, U18 records)
- 4th WA World U20 10,000m c'ship, 39:36 (Aust U20, U18 records)
- 1st NSW Youth 5000m c'ship, 19:23 (Aust U20, U18 records)



3. RHYDIAN COWLEY (VIC)

Rhydian did everything right in 2024. Four 1st places in domestic championships and 12 top 10 finishes out of 13 starts (only the Paris 20km saw him place beyond 10th, and that was by a mere two spots) included Rhyd earning his first Olympic medal in tandem with Jemima Montag, in the Marathon Walk relay. Delighted as we were for them, it's clear that Rhydian's forte is the longer distances, a point underscored by his national 35km record at Mt Stromlo Park in June. Having stepped up a notch in speed, and with his eyes firmly set on this year's World championships 35km in Tokyo, Rhyd could be set for his best result ever. At least we know he will, as ever, leave it all out there.

Best performances

- Olympic bronze medallist – Marathon Walk Relay: 11.4km 43:55 (changed 9th place), 10km 39:25 (changed 4th place)
- 12th Olympic 20km, 1:20:04
- 4th Korzienowski Warsaw Race Walking Cup 20km, 1:19:46
- 1st LBG 35km, 2:26:25 (Aust & Oceania records)

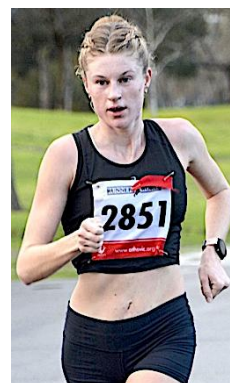


4. ELIZABETH MCMILLEN (NSW)

The term 'breakout year' is used and re-used to the point of cliché. However, it is aptly said of Lizzy's progress in 2024. Her season was highlighted by three performances of which we had little notion were around the corner: a win the Victorian 20km title that took her to within reach of sub-1:30, a huge PB win in the NSW 10,000m track title and a national record-breaking 2nd place in the AA 35km championship – on debut over the distance! Free at last of illness that required surgery early in the year, Lizzy made that freedom count – and now must surely have a plane ticket to Tokyo in her pocket!

Best performances

- 2nd Aust 35km c'ship, 2:47:26
- 1st AV 20km c'ship, 1:30:47
- 1st NSW 10,000m Open c'ship, 43:00
- 2nd Aust 10,000m Open c'ship, 44:33





5. OLIVIA SANDERY (SA)

Olivia came to the nation's notice in a way she would not have wanted in Paris, reduced to a stager by dehydration and heat stress and a subsequent DNF. She returned with a vengeance in December, saving the best for last with a huge 10,000m PB in the NSW track title, followed by the result of her career so far – a new national and Oceania record in her first attempt at the 35km. That this last was achieved after an enforced 3½ minutes in the Penalty zone, with a 'sword of Damocles' fourth red card hanging over her, is testament to her grit and preparedness to crash through or crash. This time, fortune favoured the brave.

- 1st Aust 35km c'ship, 2:45:32 (Aust & Oceania recs)
- 2nd NSW 10,000m Open c'ship, 43:11
- 7th Korzienowski Warsaw Race Walking Cup 20km, 1:32:35
- 5th Aust & Oceania 20km c'ship, 1:30:52

6. WILL THOMPSON (VIC)

This really was Will's breakout year, one which saw him step up to the 35km distance as if he'd been doing it all his life. A brace of 35's in quick succession – in Japan and at home – indicated that Will is at least competitive and at best a danger, something of which Rhydian Cowley is well aware. Will has now qualified for Tokyo and, possessed of strong 20km speed, will provide stern opposition in the World championships.

In August, Will joined Tim Fraser (ACT) and Allannah Pitcher (NSW) as an emergency selection for the Paris Olympics. A fine accolade for all the hard work and progress in 2024.

Best performances

- 7th All-Japan Racewalking c'ships 35km, 2:29:58
- 5th Aust 10,000m Open c'ship, 40:00
- 2nd Aust 35km c'ship, 2:34:15
- 1st AV 20km c'ship, 1:21:46



****Honourable mentions**

REBECCA HENDERSON (VIC)

Bec's return to form following a long recuperation from injury saw her set a new national 35km record in Canberra in June, coming off a fast 20km in China three months earlier. Sadly, the cards didn't fall Bec's way in Paris, although she did manage a quick 45:23 in her second 10km leg of the Relay. Risk of injury also prevented a clash with Olivia and Lizzy in the December 35km. She has, however, qualified already for Tokyo.

Best performances

- 1st LBG 35km, 2:47:34 (Aust & Oceania records)
- 8th Chinese Race walking Grand Prix 20km, 1:29:54
- 1st AV 5000m c'ship, 21:42
- 4th Aust & Oceania 20km c'ship, 1:30:40

DECLAN TINGAY (WA)

The start of the year saw Declan pretty much in injury recovery as he rebuilt for the Olympics. Encouraging returns in Taicang and the national 10,000m titles showed he was on the right path. Racing only twice more before the Olympics, Dec produced all he had in the Paris 20km and just missed a top 10 placing. He later teamed with Bec Henderson for 21st place in the Marathon Walk relay.

Best performances

- 11th Paris Olympic 20km, 1:19:56
- 6th Korzienowski Warsaw Race Walking Cup 20km, 1:21:01
- 8th Chinese Race Walking Grand Prix, 1:20:00
- 1st Aust. 10,000m c'ship, 38:07

KYLE SWAN (VIC)

The year started well for Kyle with a string of fast results on both track and road. His last races before Paris were the LBG 15km and 5km, the former showing him to be in good shape for Paris with what would have equated to 1:21:30 for 20km. Kyle hasn't raced since the Olympics, although he is training again after what was no doubt some much-needed rest.

Best performances

- 2nd AV 5000m c'ship, 18:33
- 2nd Supernova 10,000m WA Tour Bronze, 38:46
- 7th Chinese Race walking Grand Prix 20km, 1:18:59
- 2nd Aust & Oceania 20km c'ship, 1:19:52

TIM FRASER (ACT)

Following several strong domestic results, Tim's year was highlighted by selection for the Olympics as an emergency in the 20km and Marathon Relay. While his services were not required, his attendance in Paris would have kindled the desire to wear the green and gold 'for real' in 2025.

Best performances

- 1st LBG Open 15km, 1:00:53
- 12th Chinese Race walking Grand Prix 20km, 1:21:01
- 4th Aust & Oceania 20km c'ship, 1:22:03

MITCHELL BAKER (ACT)

One of Australia's most consistent top-level walkers for several years, Mitch raced three times over 35km with his best result coming in Takahara, Japan.

Best performances

- 10th All-Japan Racewalking c'ships 35km, 2:31:07
- 3rd Aust 35km c'ship, 2:35:06
- 6th Supernova 10,000m WA Tour Bronze, 40:53

ALLANAH PITCHER (NSW)

Despite a season dogged by illness and injury, Allannah stuck to her goals, earning selection for the World Walks Teams championships as well as being chosen as an emergency for the Paris Olympics. By year's end she was showing glimpses of her old form with a sub-3 hour 35km at Middle Park.

Best performances

- 3rd Aust 35km c'ship, 2:57:51
- 3rd Supernova 10,000m WA Tour Bronze, 45:30
- 27th WA Race walking Teams c'ship 20km, 1:35:04

CARL GIBBONS (NSW)

A hard working athlete with good natural speed yet ambitious to succeed at the longer distances, Carl earned selection for the WA Walks Teams championships in Antalya.

Best performances

- 8th Supernova 10,000m WA Tour Bronze, 41:19
- 4th Aust 35km c'ship, 2:36:58
- 13th Chinese Race walking Grand Prix 20km, 1:23:20