



HEEL & TOE Online

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The official organ of the Victorian Race Walking Club, Inc.

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AUSTRALIA'S BEST WALKERS SET TO SHINE IN PARIS



Jemima Montag (VIC)
20km Road walk
Marathon walk relay
20km PB: 1h 27m 09s
2024 WA listing: 9th



Kyle Swan (VIC)
20km Road walk
Marathon walk relay
20km PB: 1h 18m 59s
2024 WA listing: 30th



Bec Henderson (VIC)
20km Road walk
Marathon walk relay
20km PB: 1h 28m 43s
2024 WA listing: 50th



Declan Tingay (WA)
20km Road walk
Marathon walk relay
20km PB: 1h 18m 30s
2024 WA listing: 52nd



Rhydian Cowley (VIC)
20km Road walk
Marathon walk relay
20km PB: 1h 18m 33s
2024 WA listing: 22nd



Olivia Sandery (SA)
20km Road walk
Marathon walk relay
20km PB: 1h 28m 52s
2024 WA listing: 60th



Will Thompson (VIC)
Walk relay reserve
PB (10km): 40m 00s



Allannah Pitcher (NSW)
Walk relay reserve
PB (10km): 44m 51s



Tim Fraser (ACT)
20km Walk reserve
PB (20km): 1h 21m 01s

This is it. What it's all been for. Thursday at 3:30pm (AEST) will see Australia's Olympic track & field program commence in Paris, with its race walkers opening their campaign. Now that years of hard training and preparation, as well as seeking those all-important qualifying times, are behind them, it remains only to face the starter on the Pont d'Iena - under the gaze of the Eiffel Tower - and put it all out there in the 20km road walk.

Australia's race walkers have an enviable record at recent Olympic Games. They haven't failed to achieve at least one top-10 finish in any Olympics since 1996 (of the squad above, only Rhydian was born then), and of all the athletics disciplines only our walkers have won medals at every Games between 2004 and 2016. It's a heritage that can both inspire yet daunt, even intimidate anyone expected to maintain it in the cauldron of a new Olympic competition. But the bonds between race

Date	Event	Start time (AEST)
Thursday 1 August	20km walk Men	15:30pm*
	20km walk Women	17:20pm
Wednesday 7 August	Marathon Race walk Relay (mixed) ¹	15:30pm

*Live telecast on Nine Network and Stan Sport

¹ Final selection of the Mixed Marathon walk relay pairs will be made following the 20km, and announced in the next issue.

walkers, like the walkers themselves, are tough, and all will encourage their team mates to the hilt before, during and after the race, and at the drinks table.

Regardless of final results (which, we all hope, will at least match and even exceed their expectations), it's guaranteed that each of the Aussie walkers will determine to empty the tank and leave the course knowing they could not have given more. We know this, because they always do ... for themselves, their families, coaches and supporters, and for the sport itself.

To all of you – Bec, Jemima, Declan, Olivia, Kyle, Rhydian, Will, Allannah and Tim – congratulations on just getting there, and on what you've achieved so far. Well done to Brent, Jared, Simon Baker and all of the coaches, clinicians, clubs and families on your years of work which have resulted in the picture you see below. The VRWC wishes you all good fortune and full realisation of your dreams in an incomparable location. *Bonne chance!*



From left: Jared Tallent (coach), Will Thompson, Jemima Montag, Tim Fraser, Allannah Pitcher, Declan Tingay, Bec Henderson, Rhydian Cowley, Olivia Sandery, Kyle Swan and Brent Vallance (coach).

**** WALKER OF THE WEEK ****



This week's WOTW is a triple treat: **Gwen Steed** and **Ariana Pashutina (VIC)**, and **Rain Langford (SA)**, all of whom produced eye-catching results at the weekend.

Regardless of the damp, cold conditions at Middle Park, Gwen is in hot form at present. On Saturday she scythed through the rain to win the VMA Masters W80+ championship with a new VRWC Club record of **1:19:04**, tearing around 3mins from her own 80+ mark. Ariana's nomination was earned via an enormous 4:01 improvement of her 8km time while racing in the U18 Postal Challenge race, clocking **42:24**. Ariana is enjoying her best season for several years, no doubt inspired by her selection for the Oceania Championships in Fiji earlier this year.

Meanwhile, across the border, **Rain** had a similar improvement to Ariana's with a 4:00 PB time of **42:00** for 8km in Adelaide. Largely absent from the sport from 2020 until 2024, Rain has raced regularly this winter and has improved with

every start. (Unfortunately I couldn't locate a photo of Rain for this award, but we hope to see him in action in Melbourne at the end of August.)

Well done Gwen, Ariana and Rain ... we hope you all have productive second halves of the road season.

***Honourable mentions**

- **John Ronan** and **Kaytee Bogaers (WA)** – both had big PB performances, **John** clocking **1:08:16** for 14km and **Kaytee** **20:53** for 4km.
- **Robert Crabb (SA)** – any 6-min improvement is worthy of note, and so was Robert's **24:03** for 3km, ripping 6:27 from his previous time.
- **Logan Allison (VIC, 9yo)** – a 1:07 PB for 3km, recording **11:47**.



CLUB NEWS and RESULTS

***Next weekend ...**

Saturday 3 August – Middle Park

PRIZES DAY

Handicap winner in each event wins a prize

2.00pm	8km points race	Open
2.00pm	6km points race	Open
2.00pm	4km points race	Open
2.15pm	2km points race	Open
2.15pm	1km points race	Open

Entries will be accepted up until 6.00pm on Friday 2 August. Enter online at <https://www.revolutionise.com.au/vrwc/>

*NEW MEMBER

It's with pleasure that we welcome **Natalie Ramirez**, of Knox LAVic centre, to the VRWC ranks. Natalie competed in the recent Little Aths road championships, winning the U10 event, and she has had a couple of races with us already. We wish Natalie lots of success and enjoyment, as well as steadily faster times.

It's your chance to score a prize next Saturday! Prizes will be awarded to the winners of handicaps in their age groups, not in a set distance as in previous years. So you have more chance of winning. Enter now!

VRWC RWA Challenge & Club points results, 27 July – Middle Park

Last week's miserable weather (minus the wind, thankfully) returned on Saturday to chill and soak us, though not enough to deter 37 hardy entrants from tackling the RWA Postal challenge races in a quest to boost the VRWC's points and enhance our chances in the Brennen Shield. As with last weekend, most walkers appreciated the cool, oxygen-rich conditions and several pleasing performances were recorded.

Having been 'duded' last week out of a VRWC 3km record because of insufficient judges, **Gwen Steed** took advantage of a full panel this time around to post the result of the day, demolishing her own W80+ mark for 10km with **1:19:04**. It was a terrific walk by Gwen, who was competing in the VMA championship as well as the Masters Challenge division. **Mark Thomas** and **Carolyn Rosenbrock** had the fastest of the Masters 10km times with **56:32**

*In last Saturday's 3km race, **Addison Frenken's** time of **17:48** was a PB by 0:48. Well done Addi, and apologies for missing it in the results.*



Soaked again! Two weeks running! (Can you hear them laughing in NSW?)

and **1:00:43**. New Zealand's **Jonah Cropp**, competing in the U20 10km by invitation, took line honours easily with **44:43** and showed he is in fine shape for the upcoming World U20 championships in Lima. **Alejandro Stephens** and **Char Hay** had the quickest of the Club 10km times, both in the Open division.

Our sole U18 8km entrant, **Ariana Pashutina**, tore a massive 4:01 from her PB with an excellent **42:24**. Meanwhile, the Challenge's age/distance structure saw six walkers trying new distances. Three of these were in the 5km with **Max Davidson** opening his account with a quick 24:34, while **Hannah Matthews** and **Mackenzie Turner** should both progress in short order with more experience over the distance.

New member **Natalie Ramirez**, who won U10 gold at the recent LAVic road championships, had her first outing over the testing 2km and shows plenty of promise. Another huge improver was **Logan Allison** whose **11:47** for 2km was a PB by over a minute. **Addison Frenken** turned the tables on her Club championship conqueror, **Pippa Read**, with a 10sec win and a 2km PB. **Aria di Benedetto** also cut into her previous best in a big way, taking 0:28 from her 1.5km PB.



The Masters get stuck into their 10km ...



... and enjoy the rewards later.

RWA 10km Open, U20 & VMA Masters 10km c'ship

1 Char Hay	FOpen	53:38	
1 Carolyn Rosenbrock	F60-64	1:00:43	
1 Karyn O'Neill	F65-69	1:13:17	
1 Heather Carr	F70-74	1:08:10	
1 Gwen Steed	F80-85	1:19:04	Club W80+ rec.
.. Emily Smith	FU20	DQ	

1 Alejandro Stephens	MOpen	50:47	
Inv. Jonah Cropp (NZL)	MU20	44:43	
.. David Smyth	M50-54	DNF	
1 Mark Thomas	M60-64	56:32	
1 Terry O'Neill	M65-69	1:03:44	
2 Paul Moritz	M65-69	1:09:12	
1 Colin Heywood	M70-74	1:01:06	
2 John Nottle	M70-74	1:11:40	
1 Andrew Jamieson	M75-79	1:04:09	
1 Gunther Ilgoutz	M85-90	1:26:24	

RWA 8km U18

1 Ariana Pashutina	FU18	42:24	PB 4:01
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Now it's the 5k and 3k's turn to defy the wet!

RWA 5km U16

1 Matilda Read	FU14	27:32	
2 Hannah Matthews	FU16	30:13	First 5km
3 Mackenzie Turner	FU16	31:01	First 5km

1 Max Davidson	MU16	24:34	First 5km
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RWA 3km U14

1 Mya McClure	FU14	14:41	
2 Caitlyn Shipham	FU12	21:17	

1 Angus Shuttleworth	MU14	15:16	
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RWA 2km U12

1 Addison Frenken	FU12	11:00	PB 0:02
2 Pippa Read	FU12	11:10	
3 Erlyn Singh	FU12	12:58	
4 Natalie Ramirez	FU10	13:40	First 2km

1 Logan Allison	MU10	11:47	PB 1:07
2 Brodie Welsh	MU12	11:51	

RWA 1.5km U10

1 Payton Welsh	FU10	9:05	First 1.5km
2 Aria Di Benedetto	FU10	10:22	PB 0:28
3 Abby Fowler	FU10	10:23	

1 Dimitri Pashutin	MU10	9:52	First 1.5km
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***This week's action portraits:**

Char, Caitlyn, Andrew, Jonah, Max, Addison, Alejandro, Natalie, Angus, Mackenzie, Pippa, Colin, Dimitri, Terry, Logan, Jonathan, Gunther and Hannah.

****Club Points results**

Open 10km

1 Char Hay	FOpen	53:38	1 Jonah Cropp	MU20	44:43
2 Carolyn Rosenbrock	F60-64	1:00:43	2 Alejandro Stephens	MOpen	50:47
3 Karyn O'Neill	F65-69	1:13:17	3 Mark Thomas	M60-64	56:32
4 Heather Carr	F70-74	1:08:10	4 Colin Heywood	M70-74	1:01:06
5 Gwen Steed	F80-85	1:19:04	5 Terry O'Neill	M65-69	1:03:44
.. Emily Smith	FU20	DQ	6 Andrew Jamieson	M75-79	1:04:09

Open 8km

1 Ariana Pashutina	FU18	42:24	7 Paul Moritz	M65-69	1:09:12
			8 John Nottle	M70-74	1:11:40
			9 Gunther Ilgoutz	M85-90	1:26:24
			.. David Smyth	M50-54	DNF

Open 5km

1 Matilda Read	FU14	27:32	1 Max Davidson	MU16	24:34
2 Hannah Matthews	FU16	30:13	2 Jonathan Ho	MU20	28:58
3 Mackenzie Turner	FU16	31:01			
4 Emily Garside	FOpen	32:51			

Open 3km

1 Mya McClure	FU14	14:41	1 Angus Shuttleworth	MU14	15:16
2 Caitlin Shipham	FU12	21:17	2 Arthur Robinson	MU16	22:10

Open 2km

1 Addison Frenken	FU12	11:00	1 Logan Allison	MU10	11:47
2 Pippa Read	FU12	11:10	2 Brodie Welsh	MU12	11:51
3 Erlyn Singh	FU12	12:58			
4 Natalie Ramirez	FU10	13:40			

Open 1.5km

1 Payton Welsh	FU10	9:05	1 Dimitri24 Pashutin	MU10	9:52
2 Aria Di Benedetto	FU10	10:22			
3 Abby Fowler	FU10	10:23			

****Handicaps**

Name		M/F	H'cap pl.	
David	Smyth	M	M40+	DNF
Heather	Carr	F	M60+	1
Karyn	O'Neill	F	M60+	2
Carolyn	Rosenbrock	F	M60+	3
Gwen	Steed	F	M60+	NPT
Mark	Thomas	M	M60+	1
Colin	Heywood	M	M60+	2
Terry	O'Neill	M	M60+	3
Andrew	Jamieson	M	M60+	4
John	Nottle	M	M60+	5
Paul	Moritz	M	M60+	NPT
Char	Hay	F	Open	1
Emilie	Garside	F	Open	2
Alejandro	Stephens	M	Open	1
Payton	Welsh	F	U10	1
Aria	Di Benedetto	F	U10	2
Abby	Fowler	F	U10	3
Natalie	Ramirez	F	U10	NPT
Logan	Allison	M	U10	1
Dimitri	Pashutin	M	U10	2
Caitlyn	Shipham	F	U12	1
Pippa	Read	F	U12	2
Addison	Frenken	F	U12	3
Erlyn	Singh	F	U12	4
Brodie	Welsh	M	U12	1
Matilda	Read	F	U14	1
Mya	McClure	F	U14	2
Angus	Shuttleworth	M	U14	1
Mackenzie	Turner	F	U16	1
Hannah	Matthews	F	U16	2
Max	Davidson	M	U16	NPT
Arthur	Robinson	M	U16	
Ariana	Pashutina	F	U18	1
Emily	Smith	F	U20	DQ
Jonathan	Ho	M	U20	1

As always, none of this would happen were it not for the input from our officials, helpers and supporters. (Note: If you assist in any way during the season, please sign the Officials check-in at the Club so that we can recognize your contribution.)

We thank the following for their efforts in providing a rewarding competitive and social experience for our athletes. If you're not on the list, be assured that we appreciated your contribution:

Manager	Mark Donahoo
Referee:	Brendan Ferrari
Race check in	Bill Carr
Recorders	Bob Gardiner, Bill Carr, Alla Pashutina, Margaret Hay, Kevin Cassidy

Timekeepers Stu Cooper, Mark Donahoo
Judges: Brenda Felton (C), Michael Bodey, Di Lowden, Scott Nelson , Gordon Loughnan, David Cash
Set up, Pack up: Carolyn Rosenbrock, Bob Gardiner, Stu Cooper, Karyn O'Neill, Terry O'Neill, Michael Bodey
Bike rider Tim Erickson
Presentation Mark Donahoo
Photos Therese Smith (Visit <https://www.facebook.com/media/set?set=oa.1946916479073477&type=3> to see more of Therese's great shots.)
Walkers: 34

****To all Members****
Important Notice re Points competitions

Trophies and Certificates

*To be eligible for a trophy, walkers must have received **a minimum of 5 points** in the competitions and competed in at least **two** Points day competitions.

*Certificates will be awarded to athletes who finish in the top three in their age group but do not qualify for a trophy.

To see the Points tallies for Times and Handicaps as they stand currently, visit
<https://www.vrwc.org.au/vrwcpointscmps.shtml>

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****WE NEED BOTH ... AND WE NEED THEM NOW!***
Could YOU, or someone you know, be one? Check the Notice board on Page 14 for further information

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AROUND THE COUNTRY

NEW SOUTH WALES

RWA Postal challenge results, 27 July – Chipping Norton

The NSWRC held its Postal Challenge races in two locations at the weekend. **Frank Overton** report that the Sydney weather was very cold, wet and windy. Credit to everyone (athletes and officials) who turned out for the races as they've had a rugged run with the weather this winter.

Long Division 10km

1. Brendan Pospischil (M) 56:58

Medium Div 10km

1. Aiden Pospischil (M) 1:05:39
 2. Jessey Bektas (F) 1.05.43

Short Div 5km

1. Sophie Polkinghorne (F) 27:10
 2. Jessica Loring (F) 29:53
 3. Nicolle Chalinor 41:38
 4. Emily Challinor (F) 48:16
 5. Sarah Chalinor 48:16
 6. Brendan Hyde (M) 54:38

Under 16 years 5km

1. Christopher Nilon (M) 30:31
 2. Ashleigh Farrugia (F) 37:05

Under 14 years 3km

1. Nate Appleyard (M) 15:16
 2. Noah Vella (M) 15:34
 3. Sagan Jones (M) 16:09
 4. Ashleigh Mansell (F) 16:17
 5. Mitchell McCarthy (M) 16:24
 6. Bentley Luketic (M) 16:58
 7. Hannah Hewitt (F) 17:02
 8. Madeline Kot (F) 19:04
 9. Alexander Dennett (M) 19:30
 10. Luca Barakat (M) 25:53

Under 12 years 2km

1. Avia Luketic (F) 10:50
 2. Beth Cochrane (F) 11:29
 3. Addison Jenkins (M) 11:58
 4. Hugo Siciliano (M) 13:05
 5. Veronica Dennett (F) 13:37
 6. Chloe Farrugia (F) 14:26
 7. Amelie Barakat (F) 16:43

Under 10 year 1.5km

1. Daniel Smart (M) 8:58

2. Eric Colgan (M)	9:30
3. Kostya Peart (M)	10:39
4. Nasrin Hewitt (M)	11:17
5. James Barakat (M)	13:53

****NSWRWC results, 27 July – Central Coast**

Long Division Open 10km

1. Jack McGinniskin (M)	43:12
2. Dylan Richardson (M)	44:00
3. Hannah Mison (F)	44:44
4. Bridget Bell (F)	55:09

Under 18 years 8km

1. Chelsea Roberts (F)	39:05
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Open 5km

1. Hannah Bolton (F)	23:57
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SOUTH AUSTRALIA SARWC results, 27 July – South Parklands

Kim Mottrom reports that they had nice weather for a change in Adelaide on Saturday, with big PB's from **Robert Crabb**, **Rain Langford** and **Angelina Legrand**.

They also had some new members in the 1500m, coming through from the Little Athletics meets.

Open 8km

Rain Langford	42:00	PB 4:00
Kristy Templer	1:10:41	

Open 3km

Robert Crabb	24:03	PB 6:27
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Open 6km

Cooper Rech	34:27	
Jasmine Crabb	52:10	First 6km
Alex McEwan	52:10	PB 0:52
Bill Starr	DNF	

Open 2km

Liliana Templer	11:51
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Open 1.5km

Aria Crispe	10:53
Jayda King	11:23
Rachel Pemberton	11:53
Arizona Small	14:28
Martin Crabb	DQ

Open 4km

Sebastian Richards	18:58	PB 0:50
Angelina Legrand	20:18	PB 1:24

TASMANIA TRWC results, 27 July – Seven Mile Beach

Thanks to **David Moore** for these results:

2km

1. Elsie Woodward	Huon LA	16:27
2. Bianca Sugiarto	Huon LA	17:55
3. Dave Moore	TMA	20:09

3km

1. Adele Woodward	OVA	21:31
2. Wayne Fletcher	NS	28:30

5km

1. Oliver Morgan	SB	26:19
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WESTERN AUSTRALIA WARWC Handicap results, 28 July - Woodbridge

Terry Jones reports that there were no weather dramas for the WA walkers yesterday – ‘cloudy, mild, mostly dry and calm’ was his summation. Can’t hope for much better than that in midwinter.

John Ronan and **Kaytee Bogaers** were big improvers on the day, with John clocking a 3:51 PB for 14km and Kaytee also impressive, taking 1:25 off her 4km time.

14K Handicap		8K Handicap	
John Ronan	1:08:16	Andrew Duncan	46.36
Wendy Farrow	1:39:17		
Ali Griffin	1:13:59	2K Handicap	
Melissa Lewis	1:26:07	William Duffield	15.30
		Rahni Fowler	13.12
4K Handicap		Makenzie Sillitto	11.54
Steve Travell	37.41	Fiona van Heerwaarden	15.02
Darcy Bramwell-Kays	23.47		
Savannah Carnaby	23.29	1K Handicap	
Fiona van Heerwaarden	27.34	Dante van Heerwaarden	8.24
Trinity Doulis	24.05	Tammy Bogaers	9.23
Kaytee Bogaers	20.53	Zoe Fowler	8.10



A few weeks ago, it became clear that the USA would not be represented in race walking at this year’s Olympics - the first time this had happened in the history of Olympic walks. Worse, it appeared that a reappearance of American walkers at future Games was no certainty – at least, not in the foreseeable future. How did this come to pass? And does the will to reverse the situation exist?

Obituary Written for U.S. Race Walking? Or Can Americans Return to Olympics?

by **Ken Stone** (reprinted from *Times of San Diego* – 16 July)

Once upon a time, the future of American race walking looked bright. Olympic medals beckoned at the end of a rainbow beginning in Chula Vista. In 1997, the ARCO Olympic Training Center — as it was then known — became a Mecca for America’s best male walkers. And thanks to funding from the North American Racewalking Institute, a top-notch coach was hired: Enrique Peña.

Under Peña’s guidance, Team USA sent a slew of 20K and 50K race walkers to the Games. “We had a good top group of guys — 1999 represented our fastest national championships ever,” with three breaking the 1-hour, 25-minute barrier at 20 kilometers, and “like six guys or something under 1:27,” said one walk expert.

At the 2000 Athens Games, the U.S. was represented by four walkers, including current Cuyamaca College coach Tim Seaman. In 2004, Seaman competed again at the 20K distance, with four walking teammates.

But 2024? Nothing going.

No male or female walkers — or a team in the new marathon race walk mixed relay — will compete in Paris for Team USA. In a cruel joke of misunderstanding, hundreds of stories appeared online saying 58-year-old Michelle Rohl, a three-time Olympian, would return to the Games as a 20K walker.

“We tried to correct it early, but it just went wild,” husband Michael Rohl told me Monday. His wife had finished third at the Olympic Trials — normally a ticket to the Games — but her time of 1:42:26 was well off the Paris women’s qualifying standard of 1:29:20.

And none of the top three, including runner-up Miranda Melville of Chula Vista, were close. Robyn Stevens won in 1:37:37.

A silent scream went up from West Long Branch, New Jersey, where 90-year-old Olympian Elliott Denman follows his favorite sport.

“It’s just awful,” said Denman, 11th in the 1956 Melbourne Games 50K walk. “This is the first time in Olympic history there will be no USA race walkers in the Games.”

Also sounding the alarm was Alan Abrahamson, who wrote a scathing 1,600-word essay.

“If track and field were a ‘family,’ race walk in the United States would be that kid hidden in the closet under the stairs,” he wrote. “Sorry, no magic.”

Abrahamson urged that “planning and purpose for LA 2028 and beyond needs to start — now. ... In classic American fashion, if this were a corporation, someone would figure out how to fix this, and fast, and that’s what ought to happen.”

But the problem is decades old.

In 2004, Sports Illustrated’s Gary Smith profiled race walker Al Heppner, who committed suicide by jumping off Interstate 8’s tall Pine Valley bridge in East County after failing to make the Olympic team at 50K. (He took fifth in a Chula Vista Trials.)

Smith wrote: “Bob Costas, NBC’s Olympics host, would say that having a race to see who can walk the fastest is like having a contest to see who can whisper the loudest.”

Making fun of the heel-toe sport — where athletes have to visibly (but not actually) stay in contact with the ground at all times — isn’t the event’s biggest concern. I surveyed a half-dozen leading walk authorities — including coaches, officials and athletes — to learn why the life of American race walking is hanging by a thread. Some asked that I not use their names, given their roles in the sport.

USA Track & Field, the sport’s governing body, wouldn’t respond to my inquiries, and neither did the chair of the USATF Race Walking Committee, Diane Graham-Henry. But here’s what I learned.

Field Sizes Shrink

“While the absence of USA race walkers from the Olympics is disappointing, one has to take it in context,” said coach and international official Jeff Salvage.

He said a primary reason is the smaller field size at the Games. Where 65 once walked in the 12.3-mile race, now it’s 48. And making the qualifying standard of 1:20:10 would require one to crush Seaman’s American record of 1:22:02 dating to 2004.

Coach and author Dave McGovern, who competed in 10 Olympic Trials, said everybody knew that there was nothing on the line at the recent 20K race in Springfield, Oregon.

“I mean, yeah, we didn’t have a chance of any anybody male or female making the 20K,” he said. “Nobody was in the top 100” of the world rankings — another means of qualifying for Paris.

McGovern echoes experts who think World Athletics, the sport’s overseer, is trying to kill walking. “This whole marathon relay was just thrown together,” he said. “What they decided in Tokyo (in 2021) is well, we don’t have time to add a woman’s 50K.”

Then a two times 35K [relay] was considered, he said, but in April 2023, “they decided to pull the rug out and say we’re going to do this marathon relay.”

One walker told me: “We’re never sure if the walk is going to be in the next Olympics. ... The relay’s not coming back next year for Tokyo” (the world championships site.) “It’s turning back into a 35K.”

The same walker bemoaned the lack of development — but didn’t blame the USATF Race Walking Committee. Money for event growth comes out of the USATF High Performance Division, the walker said, which he called a “budget cruncher” that looks at a “whole host of different things.”

“Like: Does [diverting money from other events] hurt our medal chances and then you know, how much money are we going to get out of this?” the walker said. “It could be so minuscule — how much more money they actually get out of one extra medal but then they destroy a whole system.”

A marathon-relay team of El Cajon’s Nick Christie and Robyn Stevens went to Turkey in April to seek a top-22 finish at the world walk team championships and secure a place in the Paris Olympic field.

They were 41st in a field of 64 finishers. But after excluding all but the top two teams from each nation, they took 26th. Any chance they’d have of making the 25-team field at Paris was lost when three teams got in thanks to faster times.

On June 2, at a Chula Vista Elite Athlete Training Center meet, Christie teamed with fellow New York Athletic Club member Melville to lower the American record in the marathon relay event to 3:08:57. But at a Dublin, Ireland, event June 22, Czechia landed the 25th and last Paris spot with a 3:02:09.

Santee race-walk organizer Tracy Sundlun — who helped create the Rock ‘N’ Roll Marathon Series — says race walk leaders “shot themselves in the damn foot by having the most stupid distances imaginable in this day and age.” Instead of a 50K — 31 miles — the event should have been the standard 26.2-mile marathon, he said.

“I mean when I tell somebody that that 4-hour 50K guy ... went by the marathon under three hours and then picked it up for five miles, [people say] ‘You’re f—g kidding me.’”

Sundlun said he once gave a trinket from the Olympic Training Center to every marathon runner who beat the first walker.

He laughed. “Out of a thousand runners, ya know a couple of hundred” beat the walker.

In fact, the World Athletics Road Running Championships set for September 2025 in Balboa Park will feature prize-money walking events at standard running distances. Sundlun is helping organize that event.

Weak Feeder System

Also back in the day, several states contested shorter walks — like a mile or 5K — in high school. Notably Maine and New York. But New York walks have dwindled — with girls losing their state meet chances years before the boys in 2000. Maine continues to have a mile walk state championship for boys and girls.

Salvage, a major promoter of the sport, points to efforts to reinstate the race walk in New York high schools. “In the past [about] half the national team would come out of that program,” he said. “With its addition, USA race walking would be on a path for much greater success.”

But NCAA schools shun race-walk scholarships, with only Division 2 University of Wisconsin-Parkside catering to walkers under coach Mike DeWitt. (Michelle Rohl, a Parkside grad, is still coached by DeWitt.) Only the small-school NAIA has a walk program — contesting the 5,000-meter event.

“Thank heavens the NAIA embraces race walking,” said Olympian Denman. “Without it, we’d be in far worse shape,” noting that Canada boasts past NAIA champion Evan Dunfee, 50K bronze medal winner at the Tokyo Games.

Sundlun said he once created something called the New York Amateur Sports Alliance to promote a “whole bunch of Olympic sports” in high schools. Pushing the race walk, he and others went to school districts and said: “Hey, you don’t have our sport in school.”

Despite experiments showing the popularity of the race walk in grade and middle schools, Sundlun had few takers.

“It should have been a high school sport in every state,” he said, noting that it’s “a whole lot easier to coach than the triple jump, the pole vault and the hammer throw.”

New Jersey’s Denman bemoaned the fact the USATF under-20 and Junior Olympic meets provide excellent racing opportunities for kids, “but there is no feeder system to support these events, and fields are usually small.” Other nations have cradle-to-grave programs and fully embrace the event, including Latin American countries, and many in Europe and Asia.

“Even Kenya and Ethiopia now produce fast race walkers,” Denman said via email. “We surely need a National Racewalking Academy or Training Camp” as once modeled by the ARCO center in Chula Vista.

He called the current crop of U.S. walkers “a terrific and valiant group. But it’s clear that Team USA race walking needs a whole lot of help.”

(In fact, a U.S. citizen will walk 20K in Paris — Puerto Rico’s Rachelle De Orbeta, 24. The International Olympic Committee has deemed Puerto Rico’s national Olympic committee a separate entity from that of the U.S. since 1948.)

The last two American Olympians in the walk — Christie and Stevens — finished 50th and 33rd, respectively, at the 2021 Tokyo Games.

In his critique, Abrahamson wrote that Christie’s Trials victory was his 33rd national title. “This means that over the years the United States has arguably produced no serious challenger,” he wrote. “If he is the best this country has, finished 50th in Tokyo, and didn’t qualify this year, what — as a business proposition — would that logically suggest about investing resources in him toward international medal prospects going forward? He would be 36 in 2028.”

Ageing Up and Out

Another wrinkle in the decline of American race walking is the age of its top adherents. On the women’s side, Stevens is 41. Melville is 35. An after grandmother Rohl came Katie Burnett, 35. (Abrahamson quoted Stevens as saying the Trials race might be her last “as a full-time athlete ... focused on Olympic training and stuff.”) At the Trials, fifth-placer Stephanie Casey race-walked at age 40. And sixth was Lydia McGranahan, 47. Celina Lepe, in seventh, was the first under-30 racer. She’s 28.

A teen — two-time national champion Talia Green — took eighth at the June 29 Olympic Trials.

“Her time [of 1:51:04] was still pretty slow,” one expert told me. “But she’s 18. So like she’s got time to develop and she’s still learning the event.”

On the men’s side, Trials winner Christie is 32, runner-up Emmanuel Corvera is 31 and third-placer Jordan Crawford is 24. Back in 14th place: Two-time Olympian Allen James. He’s 60.

Coach Salvage says “our future isn’t all doom and gloom,” however.

“We have a few young, very promising walkers in [teens] Heather Durrant and Angelica Harris,” he said. “They recently finished 22nd and 24th, respectfully, at the U20 10K in the World Team Championships.” Besides Green, he said, “up and coming walkers Jason Cherng and Jordan Crawford are looking to break out by the next Olympiad.”

He said the sport is evolving with the advent of electronic methods of detecting loss of contact. “This change may impact the distances contested and open a wealth of new opportunities,” Salvage said. “There is also movement to reinstate the race walk in NY high schools.”

In the past, he said, about half the national team came out of New York schools. “With its addition,” he said, “USA race walking would be on a path for much greater success.”

Race walking evolved from 18th-century England, “when footmen who walked astride the carriages of their aristocratic bosses began to travel the country like prizefighters taking up challenges,” noted a New York Times account. “Their long-distance walking feats become known as pedestrianism.”

So American sports authorities face a question: Is the sport merely pedestrian or an investment-worthy showcase for athletic feats?

MARCIADALMONDO & O MARCHADOR ROUNDUP

The Portuguese race walking blog **O Marchador** posts news reports and results as they come to hand. The page has dozens of links to articles on race walking, featuring both domestic events and those from abroad.

- Monday, July 29, 2024 - Eduardo Camarate and Isa Ferreira win the Under-20 National Championships (track) - Viana do Castelo 2024 <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2024/07/eduardo-camarate-e-isa-ferreira-vencem.html>

- Sunday, July 28, 2024 - 2008, national records in Beijing (and beyond) <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2024/07/2008-recordes-nacionais-em-pequim-e-nao.html>
- Saturday, July 27, 2024 - Corbishley and Hopper win England Championships - Birmingham 2024 <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2024/07/corbishley-e-hopper-vencem-campeonatos.html>
Tasmania's Sam Lindsay is included in the results.
- Thursday, July 25, 2024 - Ukrainian race walkers dominate at U23 CZE - HUN - UKR - POL Meeting (Krakow 2024) <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2024/07/marchadores-ucranianos-dominam-no.html>
- Wednesday, July 24, 2024 - In memoriam Guillem Montagut Sebastiá (1940-2024), Spanish international judge <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2024/07/in-memori-am-guillem-montagut-sebastia.html>
- Tuesday, July 23, 2024 - France U20 Championships - Albi 2024 (results) <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2024/07/campeonatos-de-franca-sub-20-albi-2024.html>
- Monday, July 22, 2024 - Tiago Ramos and Inês Mendes repeat under-23 national titles (Lisbon 2024) <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2024/07/tiago-ramos-e-ines-mendes-repetem.html>

Note: The O Marchador blog is written in Portuguese. To access an English version, open the page in Google Chrome – if you haven't already – at <https://omarchador.blogspot.com>, then right click on any empty space (not on text) on the page. A window will appear with the option to translate the page. Click on it, and the page should reload in English.

OTHER NEWS

- **Athletics, doubts and optimism for Italy's race walking. And Stano is out of the favorites.**
https://www.oasport.it/2024/07/atletica-dubbi-e-ottimismo-per-litalia-della-marcia-e-stano-si-chiama-fuori-dai-favoriti/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR2IG9Fx2qllYyYa8Pf6XnKRxReXdC7c2jOabHcw-MMI7VnCo2znUXR62E_aem_Gs1sJajInpdN4_5bQ6ow7A&refresh_ce
No 20km Olympic title defence for Massimo Stano, due to injury.



WHAT'S UP AHEAD?

Victorian & National Key Dates – 2024

Sun 11 Aug 2024	AV Country Road walk c'ships – Middle Park
Sat 24 Aug 2024	AA/RWA Walk judging course – Lakeside Stadium (Cathy Freeman Room)
Sun 25 Aug 2024	RWA 2nd Carnival – Middle Park
Sat 7 Sep 2024	AV 5000m teams c'ship, VMA 5000m Track c'ship - Mentone
Sun 15 Sep 2024	VRWC Relay race & Winter presentations – Middle Park

International Dates

26 Jul- 11 Aug 2024	XXXIII Summer Olympics – Paris, FRA
13-25 Aug 2024	24th World Masters T&F Championships – Gothenburg, SWE
20-24 Aug 2024	WA World Junior T&F Championships – Lima, PER
13-21 Sep 2025	20th World Athletics Championships – Tokyo, JPN
30 Oct-15 Nov 2026	Youth Olympic Games – Dakar, SEN

Racewalking Coaches Wanted

Club coach **Mark Donahoo** is currently working with Athletics Victoria and Athletics Australia to develop a **Level 1 Racewalking course** for coaches and non-coaches.

The course would be held in Melbourne and would probably be a half-day course which would include both theory and practical elements.

The course would cover the areas of:

- Racewalking Rule
- Racewalking technique
- Exercises for racewalkers
- Setting basic programs for walkers of all ages, including peaking and rest phases.
- Training techniques
- Other topics may be included

As a beginning for to this process, Mark is asking for anyone who is interested in attending a racewalk coaching course to contact him via email. The email does not lock anyone into doing the course but is to be used as a way of finding out if there is much interest in the course. There is no date or time set for a course yet.

Spread the word amongst those who are racewalking. The more interest shown, the better the opportunity will be to conduct this course.

Contact **Mark Donahoo**, VRWC racewalking coach on: Neerims8@gmail.com

***RACEWALKING AUSTRALIA – WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS CARNIVAL** **Sunday 25 August – Middle Park, Melbourne**

9.15am	20km	RWA Glover Shield & Teams race	Open Male
9.15am	20km	RWA Carrington Cup & Teams Race	Open Female
9.30am	10km	RWA Championship	Masters Male
9.30am	10km	RWA Championship	Masters Female
9.30am	10km	RWA Championship & Teams Race	Under 20 Male
9.30am	10km	RWA Championship & Teams Race	Under 20 Female
9.30am	10km	RWA Jubilee Shield & Teams Race	Under 18 Boys
9.45am	1km	RWA Championship & Teams Race	Under 10 Male
9.45am	1km	RWA Championship & Teams Race	Under 10 Female
10.10am	2km	RWA Championship & Teams Race	Under 12 Male
10.10am	2km	RWA Championship & Teams Race	Under 12 Female
10.40am	3km	RWA Championship & Teams Race	Under 14 Male
10.40am	3km	RWA Championship & Teams Race	Under 14 Female
11.15am	5km	RWA Goble Trophy & Teams Race	Under 16 Male
11.15am	5km	RWA Knight Trophy & Teams Race	Under 16 Female
11.15am	5km	RWA Jacobson Trophy & Teams Race	Under 18 Girls

*Entry is online at <https://www.revolutionise.com.au/vrwc/events/245703>

*Deadline for entries is **Sunday 11 August at 9:00pm***

**** JUDGING SEMINAR ****

This will be held on Saturday 24 August, in the Cathy Freeman Room at Lakeside Stadium. See the advert on the next page for details of the seminar content and booking information.

Note that there has been a change of presenter – Kirsten Crocker (NSW) will now conduct the seminar in place of Zoe Eastwood-Bryson.



WALK JUDGES SEMINAR

Saturday 24 August
Cathy Freeman Room
Lakeside Stadium

A seminar for Walk Judges and anyone wishing to become a judge will be held on **Saturday 24 August**, in conjunction with the Racewalking Australia Championships, scheduled for Sunday 25 August.

The seminar will be presented by international judge **Kirstin Crocker** and will consist of two sessions:

SESSION 1 (10.00am – 12.00 noon)

- Rules of judging, for all age groups from Little Athletics to Seniors
- Operation of the Penalty Zone

SESSION 2 (1.00pm – 3.00pm)

- Walk judge documentation, including Judge's Report form, Red cards, Chief Judge Summary sheet, Notification board.

If you wish to attend, please notify Di Lowden by 10 August, at dilowden39@gmail.com

QUESTIONS

If you have prior questions or issues that you would like addressed at the seminar, please send them to Di Lowden who will pass them on to Kirsten for consideration.

** VRWC RACE FEES

Seasons ticket 12 months:

Financial members: \$110.00 paid by the **end of May**.

VRWC Club Races:

Race fee: \$12.00. Non-financial: \$17.00. Family: \$24.00

VRWC Championships:

Race fee: \$17.00 Family: \$34.00

A family race entry rate is available to any family of 3 or more financial members.

Non-members may pay a reduced financial member rate for the first race they attend but pay the higher, non-financial rate for subsequent races. **Season's ticket:** all VRWC races, not Little Athletics, AV, VMA, RWA.

** VRWC ANNUAL FEES

These are reviewed at the Annual General Meeting each year. Below are the current fees as of 1st April 2024:

Senior (Open and Masters) \$30.00

Under 20: \$25.00

Under 16: \$15.00

Associate (Officials who assist with races throughout the year): \$ 0.00

Family membership: \$50.00

Annual Subscriptions are due on April 1st of each calendar year.

Inner metro and outside ring metro members pay full fees.

Country members, pay 50% of the annual fee.

(The outside ring of metropolitan councils are: Wyndham, Melton, Hume, Whittlesea, Nillumbik, Yarra Ranges, Cardinia, Casey, and the Mornington peninsula down to Mornington.

Outside of these areas are considered country area.)

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