

HEATHER CARR

Heather Carr, born 13th August 1949, has been arguably Australia's greatest female Masters racewalker for more than two decades. Now aged 65, she combines natural ability and an insatiable desire to improve, and together they have unquestionably contributed to a long, successful and continuous career in racewalking.

2010 is a good year to take as an example. During that year, she raced an amazing 48 times according to the RWA results website. Even more amazingly, nearly all of them were of exceptional quality. Her PBs for the year were all W60 World Records or World Bests - check this out for a series of times and then ask yourself - could your mum walk like this: 1500m 7:18.5, 2000m 9:54.9, 3000m 15:30.7, 3km 15:19, 5000m 26:29.26, 10km 53:56, 15km 1:24:48, 20km 1:56:42. Of course this was nothing new for Heather as she has been setting Masters World Records since the W40 division and many of them still stand even now as Australian records. But even by her high standard, this was an extraordinary year. Add to that the fact that she is a fine runner and competes in triathlons with some success. Is there anything she can't do?

Heather's current record tally stands at 4 World, 9 Australian and 23 Victorian records. The full list reads as follows (sorry for any mistakes):

Australian and Victorian	W40	1500m Walk	1990	6:45
Australian and Victorian	W45	1500m Walk	1996	6:49
Victorian	W55	1500m Walk	2005	7:11.91
Australian and Victorian	W60	1500m Walk	2010	7:18.50
Victorian	W50	1 Mile Walk	2003	7:58.4
Victorian	W45	2000m Walk	1998	9:35.5
Australian	W55	2000m Walk	2006	9:57.5
Australian and Victorian	W60	2000m Walk	2010	9:54.9
Australian and Victorian	W65	2000m Walk	2014	11:00.52
Victorian	W55	3000m Walk	2005	15:08.4
World, Australian and Victorian	W60	3000m Walk	2011	15:54.75
Victorian	W45	5000m Walk	1994	25:04.5
Victorian	W55	5000m Walk	2007	25:54.11
World, Australian and Victorian	W60	5000m Walk	2011	26:10.22
Victorian	W45	10 km Walk	1995	50:35
Victorian	W55	10 km Walk	2007	53:41.1
World, Australian and Victorian	W60	10 km Walk	2010	53:56.6
Victorian	W55	15 km Walk	2009	1:27:31
Victorian	W60	15 km Walk	2010	1:24:48
Victorian	W35	20 km Walk	1988	1:52:12
Victorian	W40	20 km Walk	1993	1:42:22
Victorian	W55	20 km Walk	2006	1:54:17
World, Australian and Victorian	W60	20 km Walk	2011	1:56:18

Of course, some of the older times in the list were World Records when she did them – for example, her 10 km time of **49:37** (W40) and her 20 km time of **1:42:22** (W40). As an aside, she has set many more records than this but she has lost many of her W40, W45, W50 and W55 records to Lyn Ventris and Pam Tindal and more recently to Kelly Ruddick, all fantastic masters walkers in their own rights.

Heather started racewalking in 1987 but only because her children were involved in Little Athletics. It was when she went to a Little Athletics camp as a camp mother that she was introduced to the event and decided to give it a go. Within one year, she had her first record, over 20 km, in the W35 division.

Heather's first coach was Frank McGuire and she remembers her time with Frank and his group with great fondness. From there, she spent some time with Harry Summers and was one of a number of promising walkers to travel to Europe on two occasions (1990 and 1991) as part of the 'Eight Nations Trips' that Harry organized. It was in Grasso in Italy on the 1990 trip that she recorded her PB 10 km walk time of 49:37.

Heather had the ability to succeed internationally in the Open division but the pressures of a young family of four children (Olivia, Lachlan, Kenna and Ewan) made that next step up the competitive rung just too hard an ask. But it is a testament to her durability and dedication that she could single-handedly raise four children, hold down a full-time position as a teacher and continue to dominate the masters world racewalking scene throughout most of the nineties.

During the early nineties she swapped to Charlie Gorman as coach and, under his guidance, she entered what she describes as the best form of her life. With a diet of intensive track work at the Ringwood venue, she was unbeatable on the World Masters scene and won triple Golds at 3 successive World Veterans Championships (1993, 1995 and 1997). From the late nineties onwards, she turned to Mark Donahoo for advise and coaching. Simon Baker has been assisting and supporting her over the past year or so. She comments

Simon has a group that I attend on Wednesday evenings at Proclamation Park in Ringwood, and Jells Park on Sunday mornings. Being part of this group has certainly motivated and encouraged me to strive to improve my existing times. It's very challenging training with the youth of Victorian racewalking. The potential I see around me is exciting and thrilling to the degree that I am looking forward with great interest in watching the rise and growth of these capable and promising juniors over the next few years.

Heather met and married former UK soccer player (and top Masters sprinter) Bill Carr in 1999. Bill and Heather currently live in Dromana, competing regularly at Tootgarook & Frankston venues and are regulars at the Victorian Race Walking Club. Heather herself is a VRWC committee member and has been a regular winner of our VRWC Runners World award for the top club walker in the Open Women's division.

Her performances at the various World Veterans championships are amazing - a total of 27 individual gold and 7 individual silver medals and medals in each of her 17 appearances at the World Masters Championships.

1987	Melbourne, Australia	Silver (5000m), Gold (10 km) and Gold (Teams)
1989	Eugene, USA	Gold in both walks
1991	Turku, Finland	Silvers in both walks
1993	Miyazaki, Japan	Gold in both walks and in the Teams
1995	Buffalo, USA	Gold in both walks and in the Teams
1997	Durban, South Africa	Gold in both walks and in the Teams
1999	Newcastle, England	Injured. Silver in Teams only
2001	Brisbane, Australia	Gold in both walks and in the Teams
2003	Carolina, Puerto Rico	Gold in both walks and silver in the Teams
2005	San Sebastian, Spain	Gold in both walks
2007	Riccione, Italy	Silvers in both walks
2009	Lahti, Finland	Silvers in both walks
2010	Kamloops, Canada (indoors)	Gold in both walks
2011	Sacramento, USA	Gold in all 3 walks
2012	Jyvasyla, Finland (indoors)	Gold in both walks
2013	Porto Alegre, Brazil	Gold in all 3 walks
2014	Budapest, Hungary (indoors)	Gold in both walks

She also had the honour of being Australian team flag bearer at the 1997 (Durban) and 2013 (Porto Allegre) World Veterans championships.



**Left: Heather on the way to silver in the W40 division in the 1991 World Masters Games in Turku
 Centre: Heather on her way to a W55 10 km record time of 53:41 at Albert Park in July 2007
 Right: Fast forward to 2010 and still setting records in the W60 division**

She has of course dominated the Australian and Oceania Masters championships for just as long, rarely if ever losing a race, and amassing an almost unbelievable competitive record.

All her children have now grown up and all have moved on from athletics to other activities but Heather still competes with great enthusiasm and enjoyment - not for the medals nor for the accolades but because she enjoys competing and enjoys racewalking.

With her 65th birthday recently celebrated, she now has her sights firmly set on the W65 record suite and the first few have already fallen to her.

She remains a wonderful role model for all her fellow walkers and we salute her on her wonderful achievements and ongoing good form.

Tim Erickson
January 2015