

Quentin Rew Continues Walking Through Changing Times



Wellington's 37-year-old multiple International Race Walker Quentin Rew finds himself and his event moving against the common trends in track and field. Most athletes as they mature trend towards moving out in distances of which they compete. Such examples are progressing from sprints to middle distance or 5000 metres to marathon. Athletics in particular has been a leader in adding events to the schedule at major games to meet gender equity and recently the Mixed Relay. Times are changing though, as Race Walking come under the spotlight to reshape the Walk programmes likely driven by commercial and TV time slots in sport today.



Rew who is a specialist 50 km Race Walk exponent has been walking for over a decade against the world's best often in extreme climates globally, find his event requires him to change is long distance focus for the future major internationals. In his first World Championships Rew finished a solid 23rd place over 50km in Daegu, South Korea and Rew has since represented his country at four more pinnacle World Championships, three Olympic Games, along with his Commonwealth Games 20km appearance in 2018 on the Gold Coast, and several World Athletics Race Walk Team Championships and Racing Walking Cups or Challenge events. Rew has clocked up the kilometres Walking the streets in cities from all spheres of the globe, from Korea, China, Russia, Brazil, Mexico, and numerous European cities.

The future of Race Walks and the distances looking ahead he will now need to focus on his shorter 20km Individual event on the road at Worlds and Olympics with the planned Mixed team only event over 35km. The Commonwealth Games now will have only 10km Track Race Walk on the programme.

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For now, though Rew's higher priority, and immediate goal in these changing troubled times of Covid is to be able to return to his Melbourne base to reunite with his partner Jess and his 8-month-old son Atticus. Rew has been away for almost three months, now with communication only through daily social media chats as he sees the growth of his young son online. Leaving home base prior to the Tokyo Games and with his desire to return briefly to Wellington to see his parents post Games has seen him grounded by Covid until travel restrictions to Victoria are lifted after being imposed on his brief visit to home, post MIQ period.

When he returns to Melbourne, he will again team up with Australian specialist Walk coach Brent Vallance for guidance to his new and many challenges of 2022. Rew went against another common trend back in 2015 and stopped self-coaching to seek out the renowned Vallance as his coach going forward. 2022's first challenge is likely to be World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships to be held in Muscat, Oman, from 4-5 March 2022. In Oman, Rew may still be able to compete over his favoured 50km event or choose the 20km event, which demands less recovery time. Later in July at the 18th edition of the World Athletics Championships in Eugene the first version of the shorter 35km Road Race Walk and the 20km event will be on the schedule. Three weeks later, Rew's next opportunity will be to target a second Commonwealth Games in Birmingham in the 10km Track Walk now the longest and only walk event on the Games schedule. A far shorter distance as we reflect on our past successes and as vivid images etched in our many memories of New Zealand's stumbling and heat stressed Craig Barrett walking 50km in Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games in 1998 or scenes in Rio's Olympic event in 2016 of Frenchman Yohann Diniz. The walk events have never failed to attract debate on the merits for these events on the athletic programme.



As the mid-year majors' approach and the likely need for a heavier emphasis on speed and track Rew will be no doubt rekindle some memories of his initial athletics career as a track exponent over 1500m – 3000m and steeplechase from St Patrick's College Kilbirnie under tutelage of the late Graham Tattersall from Wellington Harrier Athletics Club, based on the hill of Mt Victoria near his parents Hataitai home. Rew's transition into walking was during his early Physiotherapy career which saw him based in Hawkes Bay region. A conversation with Hastings's coaching guru, the late Allan Potts when Rew was unable to recover from lower leg injuries

prompted Potts to suggest Rew attempted to do a Walk session with his son Richard. These early beginnings saw Rew find his niche and later teaming up with local walking coach Graeme Jones of Hawkes Bay.

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In October 2009 Rew won his first National 50km Road Walk title in Hastings in a very modest 4 hours 52.55 mins, a time that now Rew regularly clocks 1 hour faster for the distance. These early beginnings have seen rapid progression with winning the title again in 2010 in Hastings with a time of 4h 25.19m, then six months later in April 2011 at Taicang, CHN he qualified for his first World Champion with a time of 4h 06.57mins. Rew has now walked at over 30 International events outside Australia or New Zealand.

Let's hope Rew can continue to keep Walking on the road map for New Zealand for a little while yet, and maybe see other young track runners turn their trade to this event now that endurance challenge maybe less time focussed. Race Walking has a proud history in our heritage with numerous medallists dating back to Harry Kerr's London Olympic bronze in 1908 in the 3500 metres walk. Norman Read, the Melbourne Olympic 50km Gold and 1966 20-mile Commonwealth bronze medallist set the trend for more medals. The Commonwealth Games have seen four further medallists with Scott Nelson's 1994 bronze at 30km, 50km silvers by the redeeming Craig Barrett's in 2002 and Tony Sargisson in 2006, and Rew's most recent teammate Alana Barber achieving Women's 20km silver at the Gold Coast Games in 2018.

With the unexpected travel delays continuing Wellingtonians are likely to see Rew in track walk action at Newtown Park over the coming weekends as Athletics Wellington's Track and Field season opens this Saturday afternoon at 2.00pm.