

# Andrew Duncan

I was born in Melbourne and moved around a fair bit as a kid, growing up in Kalgoorlie, Pittsburgh USA and then back in Melbourne where I went to high school and university. I moved to Perth for work when I was 23 and I've been here ever since – I'm 57 now – Perth has always felt very much like home. I'm married with 4 kids and we've lived in the Perth Hills for 20 years – it's the only home that my kids know really.

I discovered Little Athletics in Kalgoorlie and then later back in Melbourne, where I first came across racewalking, probably when I was about 12. Racewalking just seemed to be a natural fit for me. I could move around the track at reasonable speed without getting disqualified. I won a few junior state titles in Victoria in high school years.

The only other event where I had some success was javelin. There does seem to be some sort of weird link between racewalking and javelin that I've seen with other athletes.



In 1983, when I was 18, I managed a silver in an Under 20 Australian 20 km walk champs. Not long after that, I gave up athletics to pursue other things. In my early 30s, just after my eldest kids were born, I got back to racewalking for a couple of years. Looking back on those times now, I realise that my training was very haphazard and I didn't train nearly hard enough. That was around the time of the Sydney Olympics and the idea of being an athlete again was pretty exciting.

I did get to one of the qualifying 20km walks for the Olympics and I was almost 15 minutes behind the winners. It was fun to be doing athletics around that time.



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# walking in the Zone

I really wish that I'd understood then about how to prepare for endurance races like a 20k or a 50k. I did get to Sydney 2000 as a spectator and watched the men's 50 km walk – very exciting.

In my late 40s, after no sport for 15 years, I started running and worked up to running a half dozen marathons over a few years, but in late 2016 as a 51 year old, I started walking again and I don't plan on stopping soon. I love the feeling of being in the zone when racewalking – with everything working properly the way it was intended. I've never had a coach, but I do have a better appreciation of training methods and walking technique than I did when younger. Perhaps that's down to having good access to on-line information about training, recovery etc and a good network of friends in the walking community in Australia, but in particular in Perth's WA Race Walking Club and in MAWA.

In 2018 I went to Malaga, Spain, for the World Masters Champs. I managed 4<sup>th</sup> in the 10k walk and 5<sup>th</sup> in the 20k walk in the 50-54 group. Quite hot conditions and lots of good competition in my age group. Probably the hardest races I've ever done, ever. In hindsight, it was early in my racewalking re-education. I think I'm a better athlete now and I plan on improving on those performances when I get to a World Champs next time. That's the kind of event that motivates me. In late 2018, I entered the Australian 50k walk champs in Melbourne, but didn't finish. I'll probably stick to 20k walks from here on – I think that's a better fit for me.

I suspect that the most common serious injuries that racewalkers incur are hamstring tears. I've had a few minor ones only and I think they've occurred during training on cooler days when I haven't stretched properly. In my experience, the likelihood of this type of injury goes down with attention paid to stretching and warming up before going too hard, especially in cool weather. Walking posture and recovery are important issues also for general body maintenance.

In my other lives, I'm a geophysicist and a volunteer firefighter. For almost 30 years, I've been running a small business that makes surveying equipment and software for mineral explorers.

I'm a member of the Mount Helena Voluntary Bush Fire Brigade in Perth's Eastern Hills. It's a dedicated group of volunteers that contributes their time and experience to protecting people and property from fire. They could be working anywhere in the Hills or in the vicinity of Perth or WA's south-west during bushfire season. I'm the president of the brigade and I like to tell people that I'm in the same position as Albert Facey was many decades ago. Albert Facey (of 'A Fortunate Life' fame) was one of the founders of Mount Helena's bushfire brigade - he settled in the area later in his life.

A few years ago at the AMA champs in Perth, I introduced my family to Heather Lee, a champion Masters walker from NSW with world records to her name. She was about 90 at the time and took up racewalking in her 80s. My Mum, Glenys, was so impressed with Heather's performances that she took up racewalking straight away, after almost 40 years of watching me do it. She loves the competition and the social benefits of being in MAWA and the WA Racewalking Club. I'm very happy Glenys has found racewalking and it means I see her a lot more regularly.



Andrew and Glenys in action at the State Championships 2022

IMAGE: Tom Lenane