

AUSTRALIAN CENTURION DETAILS

4. *Clarrie Jack (27.04.45)*

20:39:45

23/24 October 1971

Edwards Lake Athletics Track, Reservoir, Victoria

Clarrie Jack started racewalking in 1962 when he decided to join his broker Ian as a member of St Kevins Old Boys Athletics Club. He had recently left school, had watched Ian walking and thought the sport worth trying. He also joined the Victorian Amateur Walking Club at this same time. By 1965, Clarrie and Ian were both walking well on the track and realised that, to continue to improve, they needed to move to an A Grade club - Glenhuntly Athletics Club.

In 1966, Clarrie walked his first 50 km event, the Victorian championship, at the Royal Melbourne Showgrounds. This was the start of his career in distance walking and he became a regular in the longer VRWC walks from then on. In those days, there were a number of classics - Melbourne to Frankston, St Kilda to Chelsea, Queenscliff to Geelong, Healesville to Coldstream - and he walked them all.

After about 10 years learning the trade, he started to make his presence felt in the early 1970s and became a regular in nearly all Victorian teams over the next 10 years. He specialised in the longer distances and he recorded a lot of excellent performances over the 30 km, 20 mile and 50 km distances.

But none were better than his Centurion qualifier in October 1971 at the Edwards Lake Athletics Track in Reservoir, done in the worst conditions possible. There were 9 starters but competitors were unprepared for the weather conditions thrown at them during the race. At the start of the race at noon on the Saturday, the wind was blowing at 52 miles per hour. This went on for 6 hours into the race and then the competitors had squally periods of rain until the early hours of the Sunday morning when the weather warmed.

Jim Gleeson powered through the changing conditions with no breaks at all and passed the 100 mile mark in 18:33:58 (a record that would stand until 1979). He went for the full 24 hours and set our current record of 122 miles 215 yards. Next across the line was Clarrie with the excellent time of 20:39:45. Both Jim and Clarrie eclipsed Gordon Smith's 1938 time. Stuart Cooper of St Stephens Harriers was the only other qualifier, with 21:36:53.

C3.	Jim Gleeson	40	18:33:58
C4.	Clarrie Jack	26	20:39:45
C5.	Stuart Cooper	20	21:36:53



Clarrie finishes his 100 mile at Preston in 1972

Clarrie gained medals in 4 successive Australian 50 km title races (2nd in 1973, 2nd in 1975, 3rd in 1977 and 3rd in 1979 and was one of our top Australian distance walkers throughout the 1970s.

His best time for 50 km (4:30:17 in 1977) would have been good enough to gain him a place in the Australian team for the World Walking Championships in most years, but he was unfortunate in that Australia did not send its first team to such an event till 1979. He was just too early.

His most outstanding year was in fact 1979 when he won the 50 km event in the Australia vs New Zealand walking match in Auckland, came 3rd in the Australian 50 km title in Perth and then completed 50 miles on the Collingwood Harriers track at Clifton Hill in under 8 hours. This world class time placed Clarrie amongst the top ultra walkers internationally and broke the Australian record by over 16 minutes. The record still stands today, over 30 years later, even though various walkers have attempted to break it in the annual Australian Centurions 24 hour walk.



A study - Clarrie and Ian Jack in Glenhuntly colours - 1975

He continued to compete throughout the 1980s and actually won his first Victorian title (the AV 30 km) in 1986 after nearly 25 years of trying. His times in 1986 for the 30 km and 50 km were up there with his best ever times - he had maintained his form over a 15 year period and was still capable at 41 years of age of competing with his much younger rivals.

The following brief list shows his major successes which included Victorian Gold, Silver and Bronze, Australian Silver and Bronze and 2 Australian Vests. He was a big time performer who could always be relied upon to perform to his best when wearing Victorian colours.

1971	Centurions 100 Mile	Melbourne	2 nd	20:39:45	Australian Centurion No 4
1973	AA 50 km	Brisbane	2 nd	4:57:21	
1974	AV 30 km	Melbourne	3 rd	2:44:25	
	AFRWC 20 Mile	Canberra	2nd	2:53:52	
1975	AV 30 km	Melbourne	3 rd	2:36:02	
	AA 50 km	Perth	2nd	4:41:00	
1976	AV 50 km	Melbourne	2 nd	4:41:04	
1977	AFRWC 20 Mile	Canberra	3 rd	2:45:54	
	AV 50 km	Melbourne	3 rd	4:30:07	
	AA 50 km	Adelaide	6 th	4:41:37	
	AFRWC Aust vs NZ	Sydney	5 th	1:43:39	
1978	AV 30 km	Melbourne	3 rd	2:36:44	
1979	AA 50 km	Perth	3 rd	4:33:53	
	AFRWC Aust vs NZ	Auckland	1st	4:37:15	
	Centurions 50 Mile	Melbourne	1st	7:57:57	AUSTRALIAN RECORD

1981	AA 50 km	Melbourne	5 th	4:39:20
1982	AV 50 km	Melbourne	3 rd	4:39:50
1984	AV 30 km	Melbourne	3 rd	2:33:03
1986	AV 30 km	Melbourne	1st	2:33:04
	AV 50 km	Melbourne	2 nd	4:32:08

Clarrie retired from elite racewalking soon after his final 1986 successes but continued to keep fit with running and table tennis. He ran the marathon at the Brisbane World Vets (3:15) in 2001 in the M55+ age group and showed himself to be as competitive as ever. Clarrie also competes nowadays for Richmond Harriers in the Melbourne Interclub competition, regularly racing each summer over the shorter track distances.



Clarrie competes in a track 3000m walk in 2007 in Melbourne

The setting up of Australian Masters Record categories for the ultra distance events has given him a new lease of life and he is now a regular in our various Centurion events. At the time of writing, he holds the M60 6 Hour record (52.204 km, 15/03/2009) and the M65 6 Hour record (52.290 km, 05/03/2011).

Tim Erickson
1 August 2011