

John Rosenzweig (89) was one of two walkers to qualify for membership of the Australian Centurions in our annual qualifier at the South Sydney Ultra Festival in July 2026.

John, born 28th August 1974, is currently 51 and lives in Woonona, South of Sydney. I'll now pass you over to John to tell us a bit more about himself.

I am married to Jane and we have a daughter Clara. I have worked for the Presbyterian Church NSW for the past 10.5 years. Before that, I was a sole trader working in Disability Care, and prior to that, I worked in Engineering & Maintenance at BlueScope Steel for 23 years. I grew up in Canberra, and vividly remember running alongside local legends like Rob de Castella and Lisa Ondieki/Martin as a kid (for the first 100m, at least!), when they were in their prime, in the Canberra Times 10k.

I've been a runner, swimmer and cyclist for most of my life, focusing more seriously on different disciplines over the years. Most of my racing has been in running (club - Kembla Joggers and state - ANSW Winter Series), with a little cycle club racing and some long distance open-water swimming in adventure races and in 50m pools for fundraisers. I ran my first marathon in 2006 (Canberra - 2:57 - still a pb!). I never did anything longer until some friends of mine returned home to the Illawarra from Tanzania, following a time working over there partnering with local missions. They set up what is now a thriving charity, Forever Projects (FP), and a bunch of us started challenging ourselves to ease the challenges of others! Starting in 2019, FP began running an annual fundraising challenge, which started out as climbing in vertical gain on foot, the equivalent height ASL of Mt Kilimanjaro (5895m). The first year, we used the (in)famous Sublime Pt stairs/ladders, which rise up the side of the Illawarra Escarpment in Austinmer, climbing almost 300m in elevation over 900m distance. This was my first non-stop ultra effort. Over subsequent years, FP made it a little more flexible, challenging us to find our own "Kilimanjaro", so I did one on a steep road in my suburb (Rixons Pass Rd), and then another year, 4 marathons non-stop along the coast. I've also done an Everesting on foot on Rixons Pass Rd (I think I was the 19th person in Australia to do this). So I'm no stranger to endurance, pain and mental stamina, but was quite a stranger to distance walking!

A few people commented to me after the race that they tried to find information about me online during the 24hrs. I've never done a formal ultra before, so that's why I have no digital footprint there. However, as they say, apparently if it's not on Strava, it didn't happen! So:

<https://strava.app.link/m1TFOXaHM4b>

FP Fundraiser - solo & unassisted Quadruple Marathon (running & walking) along the cycleway in the northern suburbs of Wollongong, NSW

<https://strava.app.link/LEHJYsgFM4b>

Everesting Hall of Fame Link: <https://hof.everesting.com/activities/252e2010-ff53-4f10-9e6d-16138aae0849>

Solo & unassisted Everesting (ratified) on Rixons Pass Rd, Woonona NSW (9081m elev)

<https://strava.app.link/HKmR7KBGM4b>

FP Fundraiser - solo & unassisted Kilimanjaro / Double Marathon on Rixons Pass Rd, Woonona NSW (6484m elev)

<https://strava.app.link/49v4f8LGM4b>

FP Fundraiser - solo & unassisted Austimanjaro on Sublime Pt climb, Austinmer NSW (5425m elev - a bit short!)

Note: You have to have a Strava membership (it's free) to see these.

I hadn't heard of the Centurions until a few years ago, when I wondered if one could participate in a Backyard Ultra and be competitive, without running at all! Some Googling threw up a link on Centurion walking, and that planted the seed! When I saw you were holding a qualifier in conjunction with Stephen's event, just 45mins from my home, I jumped on it! I stopped running after my last 10k race at the end of March, so that I had a 3 month training block of pretty much just walking. My heels were not happy! I'm a mid to forefoot runner, so lots of heel-toe striking left me with chronic blistering for a good 6 weeks until my feet toughened up!

I appreciate your warm welcome and congratulations... I am honoured! It's quite the challenge, as I expected, so I was thrilled to achieve the Centurion qualifier (my A goal), with a bonus of crossing the 100k first (my B goal). Because I have no history in racewalking, I knew it would be a difficult challenge. Additionally, having never trained solely walking for more than 12hrs non-stop, I had no real idea of what it would be like in the back half. And then of course, there's the added mental challenge of doing it on a 400m track! I've done a lot of track racing while running, but never while walking, and never more than 10,000m. I must admit I had a bit of a fear of the unknown leading up to the event!

As you referred to regarding your own experience in 1976, it's quite the sense of achievement, and a huge relief to finish under 24 hours!

I have many fond memories of the camaraderie, encouragement and support on the track that weekend amongst us guys in Lane 8. Everyone was so welcoming, kind to and supportive of me, on and off the track, from fellow competitors, their crews, the officials, Race Directors etc. I am very grateful for this great new community I've become a part of!



Wow, John has certainly packed a lot into his 51 years, from a professional and personal point of view, and his latest walk achievement is simply the latest of many on the sporting front. I stand in awe of his many achievements and on his ability to continually challenge himself on all fronts.

Welcome to the Australian Centurions, John!

Tim Erickson
27th July 2026