

# Track and Field



*John Walker*



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## John Walker

### *He Hates Training!*

The Walker-Bayi encounter which should have been the highlight of the Montreal Olympic Games did not take place because most of the African athletes left without running a race. The New Zealander could count himself lucky as he won the 1,500 meters with a fairly average performance. It is true to say that he was not in top form. For three years he had travelled across continents, passing ceaselessly from the European open air season to the Australian summer before extending his efforts in the covered American stadiums—and ending up with strained Achilles tendons. So he was happy to stay with the field, where he is quite capable of taking the course at any speed, and to win on the sprint.

Does Walker then not deserve his Olympic title? Quite the reverse. His name will always appear in the history of athletics because in 1975 he was the first man to win the mile in less than 3 minutes 50 seconds. It was 21 years since Roger Bannister had hit the headlines by breaking the four-minute barrier.

Trained by Arch Jelley, a disciple of the famous Arthur Lydiard, Walker has many other achievements among his

honors. All the more meritorious when you consider that, as he himself says, he adores winning but hates training. A great beer-drinker, with an eye for beautiful girls, a fisherman in his spare moments, and passionately devoted to horses, he is as relaxed in his life as he is in the stadium. And having now won all the honors in the 1,500 meters, he will probably now look towards the 5,000 meters. But then he would have to train more. Equally he would have to conquer tendon trouble from which he has suffered since the winter of 1975. In the spring of 1978 the pain was so acute that Walker had to submit to surgery. Walker is determined, and the world might yet see a lot more of this great runner.

#### JOHN WALKER

Born Jan. 12, 1952, at Papukura, New Zealand

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

1976 OG: Gold medal in 1,500 m in 3:39.2  
1974 CG: Bronze medal in 800 m in 1:44.9  
Silver medal in 1,500 m in 3:32.5

World records:

Mile: 3:49.4 on Aug. 12, 1975, in Gothenburg  
1,500 m relay: 14:49.0 on Aug. 22, 1973, in Oslo  
(with Polhill, Dixon and Quax; he ran the second leg)

*John Walker: he might have made a remarkable rugby player*