

## AUSTRALIAN CENTURION DETAILS

27 ***Carmela Carrassi (07.08.53)***  
13-14 April 1996  
Completed 162.541 Km in 24 hours. (AR)  
Coburg Harriers Track, Coburg, Vic

Carmela Carrassi and her family came to Australia in 1981 from Germany. Her husband Peppino had been coaching one of the big soccer teams in Germany and accepted a position coaching Marconi in Sydney. So out they came with their 2 children in tow. They eventually shifted to Melbourne and a coaching position at Juventus. Peppino also coached Fawkner and East Brunswick Soccer Teams before settling back into a more sedate lifestyle.

As an aside, Peppino's expertise was vast and his fitness advising covered areas as diverse as boxing, martial arts and cycling. He was a level 3 accredited coach with both the German and Italian Federations and was an Internationally accredited Fitness Coach on top of his top line soccer coaching credentials.

Carmela Carrassi remembers her first day of training as being 11 Nov 1993. She was 40 years old, had no previous sporting experience, and wanted to lose some weight. It was indeed a case of starting from scratch. With Peppino to guide her, her improvement was rapid.

In early 1994 she competed in the Australian Veteran Championships and completed the 10 km in just over 70 minutes and the 5 km in some 31 mins to win minor medals in her division. This gave her the incentive to keep striving to improve.

With just over 12 months in the sport and one season behind her, she decided to try the Centurion distance and entered our 1994 event in Melbourne. She had a great support team consisting of her family and fellow members of the East Brunswick Athletics Club. She set off at a pace of just over 3:00 per lap and gradually slowed as she was forced to change from race-walking technique to brisk walking. She reached the 50 mile mark in 11:52 but it was apparent that her pace was just not fast enough to reach the 100 mile mark within the 24 hour limit. She continued on undeterred, taking few breaks and maintaining an almost continuous presence on the track. From lap 300 onwards, she was reduced to lap times of over 4 minutes - just not fast enough. She also suffered from blister problems and had stomach issues due to having to feed while she walked. Perhaps her inexperience cost her in these matters but she nevertheless set new Australian standards for women for 50 Miles, 100 Km and 24 hours, achieving the greatest distance walked by any Australian woman. Her final tally when the finishing gun went was 148.936.73 km or **92 miles 992 yards**.



**The 4 finishers – Peter Bennett, Carmela Carrassi, Ken Walters and Andrew Ludwig**

Over the next 18 months, she improved her times to 7:16 for 1500m, 27:14 for 5000m and 58:02 for 10000m and in 1995 competed in the Masters Games for gold in 1500m and silvers in the 5000m and 10000m. Of course, her aim was to have another go for the 100 mile mark and, under the careful eye of her husband/coach Peppino, she put in plenty of long strolls to prepare herself both mentally and physically.

In April 1996 at the Victorian 24 Hour Track Championship at the Coburg Harriers Track in Melbourne. Carmela completed the full 24 hours again and set new Australian Women's Bests for 50 miles, 100 km, 100 miles and 24 hours. These performances were as follows

50 Miles	11:12:20
100 Km	14:16:27
100 Miles	23:36:59
24 Hours	162.541 Km

Whereas in 1994, she had problems with blisters and stomach upsets and a drastically slowing pace, this time she walked like an seasoned ultra competitor and always looked in control. Once again, she was an almost continuous presence on the track and only stopped to change shoes. She never slowed beyond 4 minute laps and sped up over the last couple of hours to 3:35 pace once again. Her style was impeccable and never in doubt from my point of view.

Weather conditions were atrocious. It rained for most of the 24 hours of the race and during the night, the rain was so heavy and continuous that competitors were forced to fight their way through water that was several inches in depth. Add to that the wind that blew furiously overnight and you had conditions that will be talked about for some time to come. Carmela walked most of the second 12 hours out towards the second lane to avoid the water, thus adding considerable distance to each lap.

It was certainly a marvellous race to watch with 8 relay teams matching it with the individuals over the 24 hour period. Thus there were always a lot of athletes on the track and a big crowd helping and spectating.



**Carmela completes her first 100 miler in 1996**

In April 1997, she was back again at the same event in Coburg and keen to improve on her records. She walked almost continuously for the full 24 hours (a trademark of her previous performances) and was ahead of schedule at all times. Starting off at about 2:45 pace, she gradually slowed to about 3:00 and was still maintaining 3:40s in the latter stages of the race. She broke all her Australian records on the way and finished with a fine set of results as follows

50 Miles	11:08:04
100 Km	13:52:32
100 Miles	23:09:03
24 Hours	166.600 km

It would be 3 years before we saw her in action again. She had been forced into a long break with foot problems that required an operation and a long convalescence. She returned for the Coburg 6 Hour Walk in April 2000, completing a distance of just over 40km. But her return was bittersweet as Carol Baird had appeared in her absence and broken all her records. She was no longer the top female walker.

She no longer had that fierce desire to return to top line ultra walking and seemed content with her achievements.

In recent years, she and Peppino had built up the East Brunswick Athletics Club and they were kept busy coaching athletes, officiating and administering the club.

In the early 2000's, she and Peppino decided to return to Italy where their son Michelle was now living. It was a sad parting for us as we said goodbye to Carmela who had been such a trend setter in women's ultra walking. They still live in Italy and have not returned to Australia.