

JURGEN DE WAART C78: 23:13:03

Jurgen de Waart (C78) was one of 5 walkers to qualify as an Australian Centurion in our 2019 qualifying event at the Harold Stevens Athletics Track in Coburg, his time a creditable **23:13:03**.

This was Jurgen's first Centurion attempt and his first centurion badge and it was done with a minimum of fuss. Settling in behind Marco Bloemerts (C77) early on, he reached the half way mark in 11 hours and 4 minutes, slowing only a little in the second half, which he completed in just over 12 hours. His own comments after the event confirm a happy man

It was a great weekend. I was not sure at first, as I was not really used to walking so many laps around an athletics track, but the feeling at the end was superb.

The photos below show a confident walk, a centurion finish never really in doubt from our perspective on the sidelines.



Jurgen (2444) walks with Marco Bloemerts (2435) early



Jurgen reaches his 100 mile target



Our walk placegetters Marco Bloemerts (second), Kim Janssens (first) and Jurgen (third)

Jurgen tells me he has been a runner since he was 16, but he had never realised there was such a thing as long distance walking until he was introduced to the sport by accident. His village Santpoort, in the Netherlands, hosts a yearly festival week, with various agricultural events and music, with the odd beer in the evening. At some point, a friend started organising a walk, held on the final Saturday of the festival. When he told Jurgen, after a few beers, that he did

not have any registrations for the inaugural 50km walk, Jurgen and a friend decided to walk the 50km, which they duly did. A few years later, the organisers introduced 100km and then 110km walks and he also completed these. His aim was always to walk the longest distance on offer. He is in fact the only walker to have participated in all 9 years of the walk which is called the *Nacht van Santpoort* (<https://www.rondjezandhaas.nl/geschiedenis.htm>).



Jurgen walks in the 2014 edition of the Nacht van Santpoort

So just how did a Dutch walker end up living in Australia and becoming an Australian centurion? It's a back and forth tale.

Jurgen came to Australia for the first time in 1998, to work for a year. After that year, he and his wife decided not to return immediately to the Netherlands, staying to work in Australia for an extended period and then relocating to the USA for further work opportunities. In 2011 they decided to return permanently to the Netherlands. If that decision had held true, I would not be writing this story now!

In 2015, during a holiday back in Australia, Jurgen was headhunted for another project 'down under'. A decision was quickly made and they relocated back here once more. They are now living in suburban Melbourne, but will eventually relocate back home at some time in the future.

Anyway, back to the story!

Walking with experienced long distance walkers back in the Netherlands in that period from 2011 to 2015, Jurgen learned about all other long walks in the Netherlands and was introduced to the concepts of the Kennedy walks (50 miles), the Kennedy friend (50 miles within 12 hours) and the centurion walk.

He now started to do some of these long walks; Amsterdam-Tilburg (125km), Amsterdam-Leeuwarden (150km) and Nijmegen-Rotterdam (160km), and various Kennedy walks.

The idea to attempt a centurion walk was always in the back of his mind and, a few years ago, he started looking into this more seriously. Last year he decided it was time and targetted the 2019 Coburg Carnival. As the date drew near, he was rather nervous and procrastinated until the Monday before the event before finally registering. The rest is history.

Does he like the long walks?

Whether I really like the long walks depends on when you ask: 30km before the finish I start hating myself for participating, but after the finish with a cold beer I love it.

When I asked him about how he prepared for his walk at Coburg, his reply was rather unexpected, as he confided that his training regime had involved more running than walking.

For training, I just ran my 50-60 km per week, with a long run of 27km each Saturday. Five weeks before and one week before the event, I did a 27km run followed by a 26km walk @7.5km/hr. A more specific training could probably have made me faster.

It was certainly an unusual preparation, but one that produced the goods for Jurgen.

I am sure that we will hear more of him over the next few years. Will he now target further centurion badges? Only time will tell. But in the meanwhile, we welcome him to our little club.

Tim Erickson
3rd May 2019