

Dutch walker Martin Vos became Australian Centurion number 79 with his successful 100 mile walk in the 2019 Coburg 24 Hour Carnival. For 49 year old Martin, it was his third centurion badge and his fourth centurion walk

Continental Centurion	2016	23:35:42
England Centurion	2017	23:13:35
Continental Centurion (again)	2018	22:09:43
Australian Centurion	2019	23:20:17

Martin's long distance walking career dates back to 1999, when a friend suggested he participate in the *Internationale Vierdaagse Afstandsmarsen Nijmegen*<sup>1</sup>, the biggest 4-day walking event in the world. From then on, Nijmegen became a regular outing for him, but it remained his sole yearly walk, with each year's finish enough training for the next year.

In 2012 he was forced to retire from the Nijmegen walk with severe blistering due to heavy rain. This prompted him to get more serious with his walking and he, along with some friends, joined the *Via Vierdaagse*<sup>2</sup>, the official program which prepares walkers for Nijmegen. With a customised training schedule and with organized walks in the country, he was now on the path to greater things.

Now regularly walking 40-50 kilometres at a time, he decided to extend things further and try a *Kennedwalk* (50 miles)<sup>3</sup>. With this successfully under his belt, he decided to walk the Belgian based *Dodentocht* (100 kilometres)<sup>4</sup>.

In 2013, he completed Nijmegen easily and decided to go even further, with his first really long walk being the *Amsterdam to Leeuwarden*<sup>5</sup> in June 2015. The total distance was 150 kilometres, but more importantly you had to walk in a group with an average of 7 kilometres per hour for the first 80 kilometres. He decided he needed to adjust his training to hold a faster speed over the longer distance. Thanks to Jurgen de Waart (C78), he made it in a good time. Jurgen was already more experienced and living in the Netherlands at that time.

In 2016 Martin walked his first Centurion race in Schiedam in the Netherlands. As usual, it was a world wide affair with some 200 walkers from Netherlands, England, the Isle of Man, Belgium, Spain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, France and Denmark contesting standards from 50km right up to 24 Hours. The weather was very poor with biting, cold winds, but it takes more than that to stop an ultra distance walker and the results were absolutely fantastic. 33 walkers reached the 100 mile mark, including Martin who finished 31<sup>st</sup> with 23.35.42.



*Martin walking in the 2016 Continental Centurions qualifier*

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1 See <https://www.4daagse.nl/en/>  
 2 See <https://www.wandel.nl/via-vierdaagse.htm>  
 3 See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kennedy\\_march](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kennedy_march)  
 4 See <http://www.dodentocht.be/en.html>  
 5 See <http://www.delat.nl/amsterdamleeuwarden>

That winter, he decided to walk some 10km races to develop more speed. He had already tried one in the winter of 2015, recording a time of 1:14:53. In order to improve his style and speed, he also decided to join Dutch athletic club *DAK Drunen*, the only club with racewalks in its program.

By the end of 2016, he had improved his 10km walk personal best to 1:05:26 (by 2019, he had improved his 10km walk personal best to 1:02:07).

In August 2017, he added a second centurion badge with a finish in the annual English Centurions qualifier in Bury St Edmunds. Overall, the event was a great success, with 41 starters, 23 finishers and 15 new centurions. Martin finished 15<sup>th</sup> with a time of 23:13:35.

In May 2018, he returned to Schiedam for a second Continental Centurions walk and showed just how much he had improved since 2016. This time, he finished 9<sup>th</sup> with a PB of 22:09:43.



*Martin in action (left) and finishing his 100 miles (right) in the 2018 Continental Centurions qualifier in Schiedam*

He was now a regular starter in the various Dutch classics. For instance, he completed *the Mergellandroute* (135km) in 2017, 2018 and 2018, *Amsterdam-Leeuwarden* (150km) 4 times (2015-2018), *Nijmegen-Rotterdam* (160km) 3 times (2015-2017) and attempted the *Roubaix 28 Hours* in 2018. Unfortunately he was forced to retire from this last race at 87km due to illness, but hopes to return in 2019 to complete unfinished business.

And now to April 2019, when Martin was one of 11 starters in the Coburg 24 Hour Carnival walk in Melbourne, Australia. The hunt for centurion badges had attracted 4 experienced walkers from Netherlands (including Martin) and one from Belgium.

With hot weather the week before and with the temperatures climbing again the following week, the weekend of the race proved just about perfect, with temperatures peaking around 20C on Saturday before cooling to a pleasant 12C on Saturday night.

The pace was on target from the start, with 8 of the 11 walkers heading off briskly. Nearly all of the 8 powered through the hours, 6 of them reaching the 100 mile mark well within the required 24 Hours. For the record, Martin completed his 100 miles in a time of 23:20:17, becoming Australian Centurion 79, the 8<sup>th</sup> Dutch walker to do so.



*Martin walking at Coburg (left) and celebrating his Australain Centurion finish (right)*

I asked Martin about his future plans

*For the future I hope to improve my 100 miles time more and more, as well as my other PBs. And of course I also want to get the American, New Zealand and African Centurion badges. And, as we fell in love with Australia, you never know, I may come back one more time to walk in Coburg.*

I am sure we will hear lots more of Martin over the next few years.

Tim Erickson  
Thursday 13 June 2019