

New Zealand Athletes Ranked in the Top 50 in the World (1987 - 2008)

Compiled by Steve Hollings

An athletes ranking prior to competing in a major competition is a somewhat unreliable indicator of how that athlete will perform with respect to the other ranked athletes in the competition. There are countless examples of this. Similarly, to use an athletes ranking as a means of selection is also as unpredictable as to the likely competition outcome. However, ranking lists do have a useful purpose. If they are used over a period of time, they paint a picture of the strength of the sport, particularly at the elite level, not only over a period of time, but from one year to another.

The following is an analysis of the relative “strength” or otherwise of the elite end of the sport in New Zealand over a twenty-two year period (1987 – 2008). Using the ATFS world ranking tables for each of the twenty-one years and by extracting from them the names, performances, and ranking of New Zealand athletes the following chart and table could be compiled.

A total of 67 New Zealand athletes posted a total of 206 performances that ranked in the top 50 performances in a single track, field, road or walk event in the twenty-two year period. Men achieved 102 of these performances, whilst the other 104 of these performances were achieved by women. Throughout the period, an average of nine performances each year by New Zealand athletes being ranked in the top 50 in the world in their event, were achieved.

Gavin Lovegrove with 12 successive (1987 – 1998) top 50 rankings in the Javelin Throw, including four years in the top 10, is the most prolific of the New Zealand male athletes in the table. However, the achievement of the most number of successive years ranked in the World top 50 in an event has recently been topped by Beatrice Faumuina who has 14 successive years of a top 50 ranking between 1995 and 2008, including ranking in the World’s top 10, seven times in that period. Valerie Vili is the only New Zealand athlete ever to be ranked number 1 in the World in any event on the ranking tables. She achieved this in the Shot Put in 2007 (20.54m). Gavin Lovegrove (ranked 4th in the Javelin in 1996 – 88.20m) and Simon Poelman (ranked 4th in the Decathlon in 1987 – 8366pts) are New Zealand’s highest ranked male athletes according to the ranking tables for this twenty-two year period. Other New Zealand athletes that have been ranked in the top 10 on the World ranking lists have been Anne Audain (6th in 10000m in 1989), Barbara Moore (9th in 10000m in 1989), Nick Willis (four times), (6th in the Mile in 2004, 6th in the Mile in 2006, 7th in 1000m in 2008 and 7th in the Mile also in 2008)) and Kimberley Smith (twice) (7th in the 10000m in 2007 and 5th in the same event in 2008)

The number of New Zealand athletes ranked in the World top fifty each year has varied widely over the twenty-two year period (see chart below). It is hard to

explain why this is the case. The lean years were 2001 and 2002 with only one man (Craig Barrett) and three women (Jenny Dryburgh, Chantal Brunner, Beatrice Faumuina) ranked in the top 50 in the World in 2001, and two men (Craig Barrett, Ian Winchester) and two women (Valerie Adams, Beatrice Faumuina) ranked in the top 50 in the World in 2002. Of specific note should be that in both of these years there was not a single New Zealand runner, male or female, ranked in the World top 50. The ranked athletes were all in field events and in the 50km Walk! By way of comparison, in 1988 and 1989 the entire top 50 ranked performances in the women's events were all achieved by runners. Similarly, in 2004, 2005 and 2007 all of the top 50 ranked performances in the men's events were achieved by runners. The most prolific year in achievement was 1990 with a total of 15 World top 50 ranked performances achieved by 13 different athletes in 11 different events.

These tables also illustrate the relative strength or dominance of certain events from a New Zealand perspective. New Zealand has not had a woman ranked in the World's top 50 in this twenty-two year period in the 100m, 200m, 400m, 100mHurdles, 20km Walk, and Triple Jump. Whereas a New Zealand man has not appeared in the World top 50 in 110m Hurdles, Triple Jump, Pole Vault and Hammer over the same period. There has been at least one occasion where a New Zealand man or a New Zealand woman has appeared in the World top 50 in any one-year in each of the other recognized events.

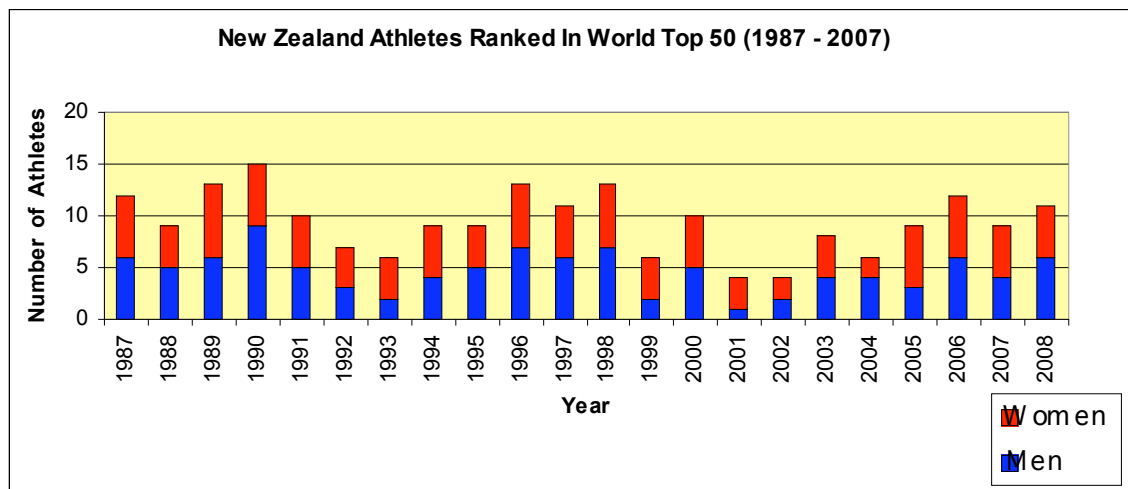
Some New Zealand athletes have appeared regularly in the World top 50 ranking list over a number of years, whilst others have made just a single appearance. Of particular note however should be the performances of Margarite Buist in 1989. It was her only appearance in the top 50 lists, but in the marathon in that year she had the 12th best time in the world 2:29:04, plus the 13th best time in the world 2:29:09. Other New Zealand athletes have had an inconsistent pattern of appearances in the World top 50 lists. Lorraine Moller in the marathon, for example, was ranked 15th in 1987, was not ranked in 1988, ranked 17th in 1989, but not ranked in 1990 and 1991. Surprisingly she was also not ranked in the top 50 in the World in 1992 – the year she won a bronze medal in the event at the Barcelona Olympics (actually she was ranked 69th in the World in 1992), and then returned to the World top 50 list in 1993 where she ranked 35th.

Progression up the ranking tables is also interesting and how some New Zealand athletes have “jumped around” with their ranking performance. Beatrice Faumuina has had the following rankings: 1995 – 44th, 1996 – 13th, 1997 – 2nd, 1998 – 4th, 1999 – 11th, 2000 – 10th, 2001 – 34th, 2002 – 7th, 2003 – 9th, 2004 – 8th, 2005 – 6th, 2006 – 14th, 2007 – 24th, 2008 – 33rd. By way of comparison, Valerie Adams / Vili has had rankings as follows: 2002 – 23rd, 2003 – 16th, 2004 – 8th, 2005 – 4th, 2006 – 2nd, 2007 – 1st, 2008 – 3rd. Kimberley Smith and Nick Willis are the only New Zealand athletes to appear in the World top 50 lists in three separate events in the same year. Not only has Smith done this once (in 2005 – 3000m, 5000m, 10000m) but she repeated the fete in 2007 in the same events. Kimberley has also achieved the pattern of steady advancement: 3000m:- 2005 – 30th, 2006 – 28th, 2007 – 7th: 5000m:- 2005 – 32nd, 2006 – 22nd, 2007 – 11th: 10000m:- 2005 – 19th, 2007 – 7th. Nick Willis was ranked in the top 50 in three

events in 2008, ranking 7th in both the 1000m and Mile, and was ranked 20th in the 1500m.

Performances required to achieve a World top 50 ranking have not changed significantly over the twenty-two years. It was as tough in 1987 as it is today. Stuart Farquhar's 81.70m Javelin Throw for 29th spot in 2006, compares favourably with Gavin Lovegrove's 79.60m for 38th in 1987, and 83.90m for 10th in 1989. Nick Willis's 1500m of 3:32.17 for 14th place on the rankings in 2006 can be compared to John Walker's 3:34.79 for 18th place in 1987 and Peter O'Donaghue's 3:35.14 for 18th place in 1990. However in the Women's 10000m event performances required to get a top 50 ranking are much tougher than they were twenty years ago. This is evidenced by Kimberley Smith's 30:35.54 for fifth ranking in 2008, compared to Anne Audain's 32:00.07 for sixth ranked position in 1989.

As indicated in the introduction, Ranking lists have their purpose – a valuable one if they are used judiciously. They give a good insight to the relative strength of the sport over a period of time. But don't get too hooked up on them – pouring over them for too long and trying to extract consequential information from them causes you to loose your hair and put on too much weight!



New Zealand Athletes Ranked in the Top 50 in the World (1987-2008)

1987 – Men

1500m	3:34.79 (18)	John Walker
	3:34.9m (21)	Peter O'Donoghue
10000m	28:06.16 (23)	Dave Burrige
	28:19.05 (49)	Ken Maloney
Javelin	79.60m (38)	Gavin Lovegrove
Decathlon	8366h pt (4)	Simon Poelman

1987 – Women

1500m	4:06.47 (36)	Chrissy Pfitzinger
3000m	8:50.79 (30)	Chrissy Pfitzinger
5000m	15:31.08 (13)	Anne Audian
10000m	31:57.56 (13)	Anne Audian
	32:25.67 (27)	Christine McMiken
Marathon	2:30:40 (15)	Lorraine Moller

1988 – Men

1500m	3:36.3m (33)	John Walker
Mile	3:52.48 (11)	John Walker
Marathon	2:11:08 (34)	John Campbell
Javelin	80.70m (34)	Gavin Lovegrove
Decathlon	8021 pts (46)	Simon Poelman

1988 – Women

3000m	8:47.7 (32)	Chrissy Pfitzinger
5000m	15:41.42 (35)	Jackie Goodman
10000m	32:05.8 (21)	Anne Audain
	32:20.39 (42)	Christine McMiken

1989 – Men

1500m	3:35.96 (24)	John Walker
3000m	7:45.64 (32)	John Walker
Marathon	2:12:27 (50)	Rex Wilson
3000SC	8:24.83 (23)	Peter Renner
Javelin	83.90m (10)	Gavin Lovegrove
Decathlon	8039pts (21)	Simon Poelman

1989 – Women

5000m	15:48.83(48)	Anne Hannam
10000m	32:00.07 (6)	Anne Audain
	32:12.78 (9)	Barbara Moore
	32:18.53 (14)	Anne Hannam
	32:43.55 (42)	Erin Baker
Marathon	2:29:04 (12)	Margarite Buist
	2:30:21 (17)	Lorraine Moller

1990 – Men

1500m	3:35.14 (18)	Peter O'Donoghue
	3:37.28 (47)	John Walker
3000m	7:45.96 (15)	Kerry Roger
	7:50.03 (36)	Alan Bunce
5000m	13:26.79(36)	Kerry Roger
Marathon	2:10:48 (18)	Rex Wilson
	2:11:04 (24)	John Campbell
Javelin	82.64m (22)	Gavin Lovegrove
Decathlon	8207w pts (16)	Simon Poelman

1990 – Women

1500m	4:09.66 (48)	Chrissy Pfitzinger
5000m	15:37.37(25)	Barbara Moore
	15:50.36 (47)	Anne Hare
10000m	32:44.73 (45)	Barbara Moore
Marathon	2:31:41 (31)	Anne Audain
High Jump	1.91m (46)	Tania Murray

1991 – Men

1500m	3:37.12 (37)	Peter O'Donoghue
Mile	3:57.70 (38)	Phil Clode
5000m	13:27.35(48)	Kerry Roger
Javelin	85.18m (14)	Gavin Lovegrove
Decathlon	8267pts (10)	Simon Poelman

1991 – Women

1500m	4:08.43 (41)	Chrissy Pfitzinger
3000m	8:53.7 (49)	Chrissy Pfitzinger
10000m	32:20.5 (37)	Lesley Morton
High Jump	1.92m (34)	Tania Murray
Heptathlon	6092pts (33)	Joanne Henry

1992 – Men

Mile	3:59.61 (43)	Alan Bunce
5000m	13:25.11(49)	Robbie Johnston
Javelin	86.14m (9)	Gavin Lovegrove

1992 – Women

5000m	15:43.31(37)	Erin Baker
Javelin	61.52m (40)	Kirsten Smith
	60.84m (45)	Kaye Nordstorm
Heptathlon	6278pts (19)	Joanne Henry

1993 – Men

Mile	3:59.5 (48)	Phil Clode
Javelin	84.54m (14)	Gavin Lovegrove

1993 – Women

5000m	15:44.65(45)	Linden Franks
	15:47.33(49)	Helen Moros
Marathon	2:30:31 (35)	Lorraine Moller
Javelin	61.28m (39)	Kirsten Hellier

1994 –Men

100m	10.11 (35)	Augustine Nketia
10000m	27:58.51(24)	Robbie Johnston
Shot Put	19.45m (47)	Courtney Ireland
Javelin	85.46m (7)	Gavin Lovegrove

1994 – Women

10000m	32:31.4 (49)	Anne Hare
Long Jump	6.63m (43)	Chantel Brunner
Javelin	62.52m (21)	Kirsten Hellier
	59.80m (48)	Kaye Nordstorm
Heptathlon	6121pts (34)	Joanne Henry

1995 – Men

200m	20.51 (42)	Mark Keddel
Mile	3:59.91 (47)	Hamish Christensen
10000m	27:55.48(40)	Robbie Johnston
Javelin	84.80m (15)	Gavin Lovegrove
Decathlon	7969pts (34)	Simon Poelman

1995 – Women

10000m	32:01.68(22)	Nyla Carrol
Long Jump	6.65m (45)	Chantel Brunner
Discus	60.28m (44)	Beatrice Faumuina
Javelin	61.12m (41)	Kirsten Hellier

1996 – Men

Mile	3:54.10 (16)	Martin Johns
5000m	13:20.15(35)	Robbie Johnston
10000m	27:42.15(18)	Robbie Johnston
Marathon	2:10:59 (47)	Sean Wade
Javelin	88.20m (4)	Gavin Lovegrove
Decathlon	8115pts (36)	Douglas Pirini
50km walk	3:51:14 (31)	Craig Barrett

1996 – Women

800m	1:58.25 (12)	Toni Hodgkinson
3000m	8:47.46 (16)	Nyla Carrol
	8:59.26 (41)	Anne Hare
5000m	15:09.32(26)	Nyla Carrol
Pole Vault	3.80m (45)	Melina Hamilton
Discus	64.04m (13)	Beatrice Faumuina

1997 – Men

200m	20.42 (29)	Chris Donaldson
Mile	3:57.53 (43)	Hamish Christensen
10000m	28:07.80(47)	Robbie Johnston
Discus	63.32m (29)	Ian Winchester
Javelin	83.62m (21)	Gavin Lovegrove
50km Walk	3:52:42 (29)	Craig Barrett

1997 – Women

800m	1:59.39 (27)	Toni Hodgkinson
10000m	31:28.12(14)	Nyla Carroll
Long Jump	6.68m (38)	Chantel Brunner
Discus	68.52m (2)	Beatrice Faumuina
Heptathlon	6011pts (31)	Joanne Henry

1998 –Men

100m	10.17 (49)	Chris Donaldson
800m	1:45.45 (33)	Shaun Farrell
Mile	3:56.42 (42)	Martin Johns
Discus	63.57m (32)	Ian Winchester
Javelin	82.08m (24)	Gavin Lovegrove
Decathlon	8007pts (34)	Doug Pirini
50km Walk	3:52:07 (30)	Craig Barrett

1998 – Women

800m	2:00.86 (44)	Toni Hodgkinson
Mile	4:31.19 (17)	Toni Hodgkinson
Long Jump	6.65m (38)	Chantal Brunner
Discus	67.58m (4)	Beatrice Faumuina
Heptathlon	6254w pts (20)	Joanne Henry

1999 – Men

Discus	63.74m (34)	Ian Winchester
50km Walk	3:48:14 (16)	Craig Barrett

1999 – Women

800m	2:00.15 (33)	Toni Hodgkinson
Long Jump	6.64m (40)	Chantel Brunner
Discus	64.62m (11)	Beatrice Faumuina
Hammer	62.84m (47)	Tasha Williams

2000 – Men

Mile	3:58.13 (34)	Phil Clode
	3:59.04 (40)	Stephen Willis
	3:59.28 (43)	Simon Maunder
High Jump	2.30m (27)	Glenn Howard
Discus	64.26m (37)	Ian Winchester

2000 – Women

800m	1:59.31 (23)	Toni Hodgkinson
1500m	4:06.23 (49)	Toni Hodgkinson
Long Jump	6.66mA (48)	Chantal Brunner
Discus	65.4mA (10)	Beatrice Faumuina
Hammer	64.60m (42)	Tasha Williams

2001 – Men

50Km Walk	3:48:05 (16)	Craig Barrett
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2001 – Women

Pole Vault	4.35m (29)	Jenny Dryburgh
Long Jump	6.68m (31)	Chantal Brunner
Discus	61.54m (34)	Beatrice Faumuina

2002 – Men

Discus	65.03m (20)	Ian Winchester
50Km Walk	3:52:35t (22)	Craig Barrett

2002 – Women

Shot Put	18.40m (23)	Valerie Adams
Discus	65.05m (7)	Beatrice Faumuina

2003 – Men

1500m	3:36.57 (50)	Adrian Blincoe
10000m	27:56.80(44)	Jonathan Wyatt
	28:01.19(49)	Michael Aish
50km Walk	3:50:34 (21)	Craig Barrett

2003 – Women

400mH	56.25 (42)	Rebecca Wardell
Pole Vault	4.40m (28)	Melina Hamilton
Shot Put	18.93m (16)	Valerie Adams
Discus	65.53m (9)	Beatrice Faumuina

2004 – Men

800m	1:45.54 (42)	Nick Willis
Mile	3:53.51 (6)	Nick Willis
10000m	27:45.98(35)	John Henwood
	27:53.28(44)	Michael Aish

2004 – Women

Shot Put	19.29 (10)	Valerie Vili
Discus	66.08m (8)	Beatrice Faumuina

2005 – Men

1500m	3:35.50 (40)	Adrian Blincoe
Mile	3:53.43 (17)	Nick Willis
	3:58.41 (36)	Paul Hamblyn

2005 – Women

3000m	8:50.43 (30)	Kimberley Smith
5000m	15:05.68(32)	Kimberley Smith
10000m	31:21.00(19)	Kimberley Smith
Pole Vault	4.31m (49)	Melina Hamilton
Shot Put	19.87m (4)	Valerie Vili
Discus	65.09m (6)	Beatrice Faumuina

2006 – Men

1500m	3:32.17 (14)	Nick Willis
Mile	3:52.75 (6)	Nick Willis
	3:59.05 (28)	Paul Hamblyn
	3:59.46 (30)	Gareth Hyett
Javelin	81.70m (29)	Stuart Farquhar
50Km Walk	3:58:05 (46)	Tony Sargisson

2006 – Women

3000m	8:47.06 (28)	Kimberley Smith
	8:53.10 (47)	Kate McIlroy
5000m	14:56.58(22)	Kimberley Smith
3000m Steeple	9:32.54 (14)	Kate McIlroy
Shot Put	20.20m (2)	Valerie Vili
Discus	63.30m (14)	Beatrice Faumuina

2007 – Men

1500m	3:35.85 (39)	Nick Willis
Mile	3:55.09 (15)	Nick Willis
	3:56.46 (19)	Max Smith
	3:57.46 (27)	Gareth Hyett

2007 – Women

3000m	8:35.31 (7)	Kimberley Smith
5000m	14:49.41(11)	Kimberley Smith
10000m	31:20.63(7)	Kimberley Smith
Shot Put	20.54m (1)	Valerie Vili
Discus	62.20 (24)	Beatrice Faumuina

2008 – Men

1000m	2:16.93 (7)	Nick Willis
1500m	3:31.51 (20)	Nick Willis
Mile	3:50.66 (7)	Nick Willis
	3:57.65 (32)	Adrian Blincoe
5000m	13:10.19 (35)	Adrian Blincoe
Javelin Throw	83.23m (19)	Stuart Farquhar

2008 – Women

5000m	14:45.93 (13)	Kimberley Smith
10000m	30:35.54 (5)	Kimberley Smith
Shot Put	20.56m (3)	Valerie Vili
Discus Throw	61.73m (33)	Beatrice Faumuina
Heptathlon	6108 pts (30)	Rebecca Wardell