

Maureen says 'I could



In focus

With Carmel Meyer

Maureen Keshwar emigrated to Australia from South Africa in 1977 with her husband and three-year-old daughter. Over time they added four more children to their family and Maureen is now the proud and busy grandmother of twelve grandchildren.

It was while watching some of those grandchildren as they participated in Little Athletics that Maureen was inspired to become a competitor rather than a spectator. She thought to herself, *"I could do that!"* so she asked some Little A's officials if there was an athletics organisation for people of her age. She was directed to the Masters' session in Cannington on a Thursday night and so, at the age of sixty, Maureen's athletics journey began. She says happily, *"Then began my love for athletics. I never looked back"*. Badminton had been Maureen's main recreational sport for fifteen years up until she took to the track. She says that at the start of her new athletics career she could only do a 60m sprint as 100m seemed too far!

David Carr has been a long-standing mentor of Maureen's. She has also received training from John Dennehy and Tom Lenane in both sprints and field events. As her fitness and skills improved, so did her confidence and her repertoire is now extensive. She favours 60m, 100m, 200m, long jump, shotput, and pentathlon. Maureen says she also loves to hurdle but feels held back by her technique. She hopes further work will enable her to add hurdles to her list of favourite events. She nevertheless holds no less than three State records for the hurdles — W60 and W65 80m and W60 300m. Despite her reservations, Maureen competed in the long hurdles at the 2019 Oceania Championships in Mackay. Increasing tiredness led to a difficult ending where she knocked down the last two hurdles and struggled to the finish line, but she still came away with the gold medal. Maureen is a courageous competitor

and a great role model for her athlete grandchildren.

Maureen loves sprinting and as anyone who has raced beside her in the short sprints will attest, it is hard to get past this lady when she is in full flight. She has great power off the line and acknowledges her determination to better herself and strive to set PB's in her sprints. However, recurring calf pain and swelling following a tear sustained while sprinting does mean she must occasionally watch from the side-lines. She is a generous and gregarious supporter of her fellow athletes and also loves a chat whilst doing slow warm-up laps. Maureen has regularly helped her friend Carol Bowman set up for the Thursday evening competition and a cuppa.

Maureen competed in the Perth Nationals in 2018 and had a very successful meet. She entered eight events, medalling in all – five gold and three silver. In addition to her Oceania travels, Maureen also competed in the Melbourne Nationals in 2019.

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do that' – and she did



Maureen Keshwar and Carol Davis sprint down the straight in the Oceania Championships in Mackay. Carol set a pending world record in the W70 Heptathlon in early February.

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She is full of praise for the quality of athletes in her age group and singles out Queenslander Carol Davis in particular as an inspiration; "...such a gracious lady and a true champion." Maureen ran against Carol in the 60m sprint in Melbourne and surprised and delighted herself by coming away with a bronze medal. It was a tight race with Carol finishing in 9.60sec, Vivienne Cash in 9.77 and Maureen right there in 9.87.

Maureen would love to travel to a World Masters Championships sometime when the world recovers from the current pandemic. She is spurred on by her memories of the 2016 World's held in Perth where she competed in the 100m, coming second in her heat, and following that up with an eighth-place finish in the short hurdles.

Maureen has written some entertaining pieces for the TFNL 'My Nationals' columns, which highlight not only her intent to better her

performances — 'I've learned that I need to relax more in my running as I tend to get stressed and lose form and focus' but also her great sense of humour. Here she writes a commentary of her two-competitor hurdle race alongside 75-year-old Albert Gay from NSW – "At the sounding of the gun we took off head-to-head and were running together, synchronising each step, just like synchronised swimmers."