

# Come in spinner



## In focus

With Carmel Meyer

Thrower extraordinaire Tom Gravestock is a quiet achiever, which sounds like a contradiction given that throwers are prone to exuberant roars as they send the implement flying. It has been fascinating tracing Tom's progression to champion Masters thrower and to hear his acknowledgement of competitors, coaches and mentors.

Recent rewards for his efforts include the 2016 Royce Foley Award (highest points achieved, 3552, Throws Pentathlon) and nomination for the 2016 AMA Award for Throws. Fortunately for us, Tom also shares his skills coaching 'Perth2016' throwers.

Tom was born in Fulham, London in 1955. At the age of nine, he emigrated to Australia with his parents and four

siblings. The family grew to ten in Australia.

Tom is married to Annette who has competed in throws, jumps and walk events. I first met Annette in the Shot Put competition at the Canberra Nationals. Annette is a delightful lady and the most petite thrower I have ever seen!

Tom took up athletics in 1968/9, joining Northern Districts Athletics Club and was later in a State team managed by MAWA Patron John Gilmour.

He says he's fortunate that his first track coach was hard taskmaster Ted Hussey (father of 'Mr Cricket', Mike Hussey) It was then he realised that he wanted to throw instead! Tom credits Richard Murray for setting him up with good technique for Shot and Discus. He won the U15 Discus and Shot (record 1kg discus throw - 159'.10.5" or 48.73m). As an U17 Tom excelled, winning and breaking State records in Throws and Outdoor Pentathlon.

A Weightlifting Gold and a State Power Lifting (Deadlift) record followed. Not surprisingly, Tom was recognised as the Best U17 Athlete, receiving the Olympic Cup.

Tom moved into seniors in 1974 competing alongside field athletics champions Alex Brown (shot put), Len Vlahov (discus, state basketball and father of basketball star Andrew Vlahov), the two Eds- Ed Carroll and Ed Neimanis (multiple record holders in shot, discus, weight throw etc) and Matt Barber (shot put, the Eagles first Strength coach.) This competition proved to be a baptism of fire for Tom. He wryly comments, 'As the smallest of these guys was at least 100kg, my 75kg, 1.75m frame did not cut it!'

Tom joined MAWA in 2009 when most of his ten children were independent enough to allow him to again take up some organised sport. He and fellow thrower John Everard became firm friends. The Gravestocks regularly visit John and his wife Kylie in Margaret River.

I asked Tom if he could shed any light on the origin of his intriguing surname; for instance, we all know the origins of Cooper, Smith, and Baker. The name Gravestock certainly sets the imagination going; however, it is a derivation of Greystoke or Greystock.

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# Tom throws caution to the wind

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Tom was able to confirm that his surname has been traced back to 1600 in a small town some 60km north of London called Potton.

Tom has always loved Shot although his best results have been in Discus. He has had to unlearn some bad Hammer throwing habits. "I have a love/hate relationship with Hammer. Lindsey Glass has been fantastic to me. He has persevered long and hard to help me slowly start to throw hammer a little like a hammer thrower and less like a discus thrower"

In the next year or so Tom will again focus more on discus. He has Warwick Selvey's M60 Australian record of 53.43m in his sights! He also aims to develop as a track and field Pentathlete. *'Some of my friends say I'm dreaming!'* Tom answers the naysayers- *"I can throw a discus. One out of five isn't a bad start."* Injury has dogged his run and jump events, however. In addition to an injury requiring ACL surgery, Tom has concurrently suffered from Ross River virus and *'Chikungunya'*...another mosquito-borne virus which results in fatigue, aches and pains. Unfortunately, Tom still suffers these effects from time to time.

For 'Perth2016' Tom aims to get close to or even medal in the Discus, Hammer and Throws Pentathlon. Accustomed to national and international events, he is not daunted by large numbers of competitors. Memorable performance highlights include a closely contested win in the Throws Pentathlon ahead of Gavin Murray and Robert Hanbury-Brown at the 2013 AMA Championships and besting former Olympian Wayne Martin in Discus. *"This Discus win was a huge step up for me, taking out a very tight competition with some 40cm separating the first three places"*

Tom is an athlete determined to achieve his goals and grateful to all



those who have helped along the way. He enjoys the friendship and camaraderie that exists between athletes. *"This includes the ongoing friendly banter with the young up-and-coming throwers like Todd Davey"*. The feeling is mutual. Todd has

publicly credited Tom with being his mentor.

Tom's motivation for continued involvement in athletics is a simple one *"to stay fit and healthy"*. Sounds good, however, he also adds, *"...and to be competing when I'm 100+"*. I don't doubt it for a minute Tom!