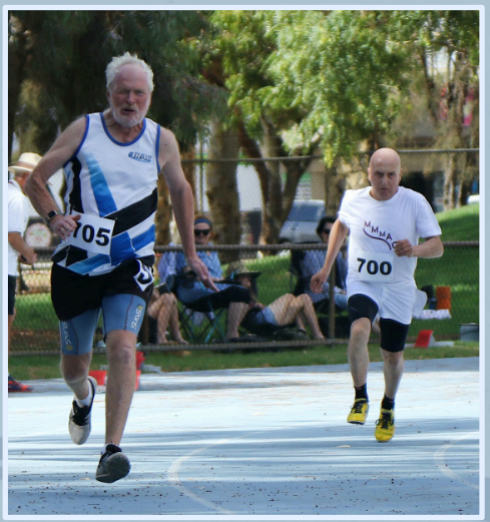
Harold Membrey

In Focus
with Carmel Meyer

I was born in Western Australia and apart from a brief stint in National Service I have lived in WA all my life. I attended Tuart Hill Senior High School in the 60s and developed a taste for running when the teachers used to send us out on cross country runs around the streets of the school.

I only started to develop a strong interest in running following Robert de Castella's success in the marathon at the 1982 Commonwealth Games in Brisbane. I realized very quickly you have to train to run a marathon and apart from the first one (which was a flop) I managed to complete about twelve of them in Perth/ Albany/Bunbury.

Throughout the 1980s I was involved in the WA Marathon Club, concentrating mainly on the longer distances, but all this stopped once I headed into the Wheatbelt for ten years (Northam and Merredin). Then, in 2000 I was transferred to Bunbury, working at TAFE. In an effort to regain some fitness I took up football umpiring and it was there I met the late Robert Antoniolli who introduced me to Masters Athletics. He convinced me to come down to the local athletics club and it is there I have been ever since.



Harold and 'Tolli' run the bend in the 200m at the State Championships. IMAGE: Graeme Dahl

I don't profess to have any great abilities in any of the athletic disciplines but consider myself more a trier and someone who gives it a go. I have a strange combination of events that I enjoy and I don't find too many athletes who combine the sprint events with throwing.

Besides the friendships and camaraderie on the track, I have enjoyed competing for the past fifteen years at the Nationals, which takes you to a different venue around Australia each year. It's been a great way of seeing Australia.

Although I have had very little success in my preferred events, I have always enjoyed competing in some events which are totally outside my comfort zone. The steeplechase and hurdles are two that come to mind and I use them as a yardstick as to whether, despite my advancing years, I can actually complete them.

One of the most amusing things I have experienced in athletics was many years ago in Perth, competing in the steeplechase. When running to the first water jump on the first lap I found there was no water in the pit. No one had told me (or I wasn't listening) that the water jump was out of action and that an extra hurdle was in it's place on the track. I guess I could always say I finished a steeplechase without getting wet.

Harold (white cap) navigates a busy water jump at the 2019 Melbourne Nationals. IMAGE: *Graeme Dahl*

Conversely, a low point happened when also running a steeplechase in Melbourne. I placed my hand on the water jump hurdle and at the same time a fellow athlete decided to put their spiked shoes on top of my hand. Subsequently my hand had five spike cuts which then bled rather profusely as I ran around the track, attracting the attention of the first aid personnel who wanted to patch my hand while I was running laps.

Serious training has always been difficult, living in Bunbury. Despite having a world class facility the Club itself has very few coaches and it has been disappointing to not see it used more by athletes from Perth.

It has always been self-motivation that has driven me to keep on running and a love-hate relationship with the South Westerly breeze which we get to experience every afternoon in Bunbury.

IMAGES: Carmel Meyer