

David Baird

Likes a Challenge

IN FOCUS

with Carmel Meyer



David Baird is a quiet achiever on the track. He gets out there and gets the job done with no fanfare and no fuss. Most recently he has been the reliable pacer on two of David Carr's World record attempts. David's answers to the 'Athlete Profile' questions were brief and to the point. It wasn't until I did some further research that I discovered what an interesting and inspirational life he has led. David has a strong sense of community spirit and caring. He has utilised his physical and mental strength to undertake challenges that have publicised and raised money for cancer research. Together with his partner Jo Richardson, David has sought out adventures others wouldn't contemplate because, as he says,

'I like a challenge...'



David Baird was born in Nottingham, UK. As a war baby he moved with his parents to Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset, where he went to school and spent his youth. At school David was an all-England 100 yards and 220 yards schoolboy finalist at the age of fifteen. His first job was as a ladies hair stylist at Stanley of Mayfair, Weston-Super-Mare, and Madame Filijan of Paris, in Bristol, for five years.

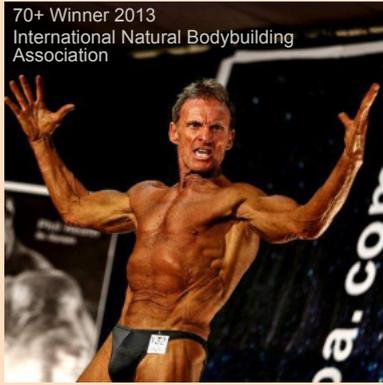


David married a local girl and *'together we had five lovely children.'* His children have inherited David's athleticism and competitive spirit. Lawrence (47) has run for England many times, having a very successful international athletics career, and more recently as a World-record-holding Masters athlete.

Lydia (49) is a road and ultra-distance runner. David has very fond memories of running at the 2016 World Masters Athletics Championships in Perth and in Malaga in 2018, especially as both Lawrence and Lydia were there too, competing with the English team. David also lists the 2018 Oceania Games in Dunedin, New Zealand as a favourite.



Also in the family - Jo's son Adam Richardson is a physiotherapist and David's go-to person for help managing niggles or injuries. David has problems with his hamstrings and considers himself lucky to have Adam to turn to for help with stretching, icing and elevation.



For about thirty years, gymnastics, martial arts (judo) and rugby union were David's sports of choice. He was selected to play in a rugby exhibition match against the British Barbarians and has fond memories of a game against the touring Junior All Blacks. Having emigrated to Australia in 1965, David played rugby league for North Queensland. At the age of 43, injuries forced him to give up rugby, so he joined the Rockhampton Road Runners for the next fifteen years. In the 1990s David also had success as a Masters body builder, both in the UK and Australia.

In 1996 David was part of a team of nine that cycled non-stop around Australia on highway one in 21 days, 21 hours and 17 minutes.

Together they set a Guinness World Record for the fastest time. (October 14, 1996)

David says, *'Challenging yourself to raise money for cancer research is a win-win. It all started with a 10km charity run, running backwards. It took me just over an hour. The following year I ran 10kms on crutches with one leg tied up behind me. That took me a bit longer.'* (David smiles at the memory).



David - 2nd from left

He competed in Triathlons for three years but admits swimming was not his forte, despite coaching, so rather than give up, he transitioned to Duathlons. David also has an impressive Masters Marathon resume, various wheelbarrow and mountain runs (the Great Turkey Chase sounds interesting!) Seems like, if it was there to be conquered, David was up for the challenge.

David joined Masters Athletics WA around 2001 as a road runner and later, track. *'The MAWA State Championships were the inspiration for getting me interested in track, and David Carr was instrumental in motivating me with his programs each Saturday at the WA Athletics stadium. It was a great honour to be asked to be pacemaker for David. My main concern was that he would pass me!'*



The Two Davids: Baird and Carr



In 2008 David ran across Australia (4115kms) pushing a wheelbarrow from Cottesloe Beach to Manly, Sydney to raise awareness of, and funds for breast and prostate cancer research. Over that time he ran a total of 106 marathons in 112 days. If that wasn't enough, in 18 days he ran 920 kms from Alice Springs to Uluru and back again with his trusty wheelbarrow, finishing May 1st 2009. Interviewed at the time, David was typically understated about the endurance required; *'Compared with just running, running with a wheelbarrow is about 30% more difficult. I feel it across the chest and at the back of the shoulders.'*

A final word from David - *'I enjoy all the events on the track especially the 400m, but unfortunately my hamstrings think differently. In saying that, I aim to stay healthy and keep on keeping on and enjoy my time with wonderful like-minded people.'*

Images: www.aussiedust.com

