

Juliana Kelly



Proud Aussie at Worlds

Juliana runs the first leg for the victorious MAWA 4 x 400m relay at the 2019 Melbourne AMA Champs

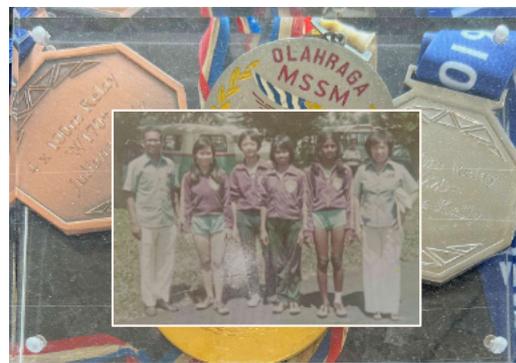
IMAGES: Graeme Dahl

Born in the vibrant city of Penang, Malaysia, my journey through life has been a series of unexpected twists and turns, much like a race on the track. Growing up in Penang until the age of 15, my ambitions led me to Bengaluru, India, with the initial plan of pursuing a medical degree. However, life had other plans for me, and in 1983, I found myself in the welcoming embrace of Australia, celebrating my 40th year in the land Down Under this past January. I am married to Brian and we have a 23 year old son.

My academic path took a different route at the University of Queensland, where I earned a Bachelor of Commerce. For the next 25 years, I delved into the world of accounting, practicing my profession at mainly engineering construction corporations. A shift in gears brought me into the realms of recruitment and remuneration analysis for the subsequent decade. The past five years have seen me dedicated to helping individuals find their voice through public speaking.

Yet, amidst the ebb and flow of professional life, a passion rooted in my childhood never waned - the thrill of the track. Since the tender age of 11, running has been my constant companion. At 12, I proudly represented the State of Penang in the under 13's 4x100m relay, breaking records and paving the way for a lifelong love affair with the track.

My school days were marked by an escape from classrooms to participate in inter-school sports, a welcome divergence that fuelled my love for running. The nostalgia of those days is etched in my memory. Up until I was at high school I ran at school carnivals then it all stopped and I took up other forms of exercise to keep fit.



Juliana (above left) and her U/13, 4 x 100m relay team

Image supplied

A hiatus from the track ensued, only to be reignited by an unexpected muse - my son. Witnessing his sprinting prowess at the stadium during school carnivals, I discovered the world of Masters Athletics at the age of 51. The dream of representing Australia at the World Championships in 2016 became a reality, a surreal moment that resonated with the childhood dream many harbour - the Olympics.



Juliana puts her strong calves to good use



A perfect landing



In the starter's hands

My affinity lies with the short sprints - the 60m, 100m, and 200m dashes - a realm where my fast-twitch muscles find their home. The 400m is a tolerable endeavour, but the pain that engulfs my body at the 120m mark is a testament to the gruelling nature of the race. Training, though rudimentary, is a constant, supplemented by swimming sessions twice a week, covering 4-5km in total. Weight training and Body Fit Training sessions with my husband contribute to my overall fitness regimen.

I aim to get out there, being active - running, swimming, gym-ing, cycling, hiking and, my new hobby, windsurfing. The four important things in life are regular exercise, healthy nutrition, enough sleep and having a positive mind. In both the 2016 Perth World Championships and the 2019 AMA Championships in Melbourne I enjoyed the great feeling of running in a team relay and contributing to the success. I also enjoy helping out at the Tuesday evening sessions at WAAS, most recently with the starter's pistol in my hand!

My greatest love as a child was ballet, but I didn't get the chance to dance until I was 47 years old. Adult ballet fulfilled this long-time dream and I even trained for nine months to get into pointe shoes. Fortunately, I already have strong calves and ankles (from sprinting and cycling as a teenager) so reaching for this goal was in sight and at my 50th birthday I managed to perform a dance for a small intimate group of family and friends. That was as good as dancing on stage. Ballet dancing on pointe stopped when I tore my plantar fascia in 2015 while running the 200m; the third time I had run with Masters! My passion for ballet is still strong but I have to be satisfied to just go and watch the WA Ballet perform.

The upcoming State championships beckon, and my aspirations are simple - to rekindle the spirit of the sprint in all three events without succumbing injuries. Long jump calls out to me, and the ambitious desire to try Triple jump lingers in my thoughts, though a shadow of doubt whispers about my coordination.

Hurdling, a childhood fantasy, seems elusive now, with knees weathered by 12 years of Taekwondo kicks. Each scar is a testament to a journey filled with unexpected detours, hurdles and sprints, that make the race of life all the more exhilarating.

I am hopeful to keep running as long as I can. As I lace up my running shoes, I carry with me the spirit of a sprinter, the endurance of a squad swimmer and the resilience forged through the hurdles of life, sprinting towards the next chapter with unwavering determination.



Grace, strength and beauty
(Image supplied)



Juliana runs the bend at ECAC

*“Success is not how far you get
but the distance we travel from where we started.”*