

Mount Isa Athletics

PRESS RELEASE

15th July, 2012

The Master Class

There are not many sports around where an entire family can turn up and compete at the same place and the same time. Athletics is one of those sports that really can be called “family orientated”.

As parents we usually encourage our children to try the sports we enjoyed most when we were younger. I, myself, was unknowingly guilty of this when I encouraged my then five year old daughter to have a go at athletics and to my delight she loved it. Then gradually you find yourself having a sneaky throw when no-one was looking just to see if “you’ve still got it”. You then take your kids to a carnival and find out that virtually every track and field competition in North Queensland caters for everybody including parents or as we call them “Masters”.

For me this was way back in the early 00’s, when the carnivals there were reasonable numbers of Masters competing but at Club level none at all. First Lesson – don’t worry about it, if you enjoy it, do it. Then low and behold other parents see you having a go and start telling you what they used to do back at school. Second Lesson – give them a go. Some parents are interested but have never done athletics before so give them a crash course the same as you would any other athlete that turned up to the Club. The others are usually the age champions of the past keen to see “if they still have it”.

From this point you will notice others taking an interest because now they can be part of a group. As long as there are one or two people in a Club who are constantly encouraging others to participate the Masters segment of a Club will flourish. The camaraderie and fun factor of the Masters then overflows to Carnivals. Ten years ago all the Masters, male and female, would compete in an event at the same time to keep group numbers up. While we are there having a laugh and an encouraging cheer, other parents are watching and thinking “that looks like fun, I might give it a go”. The next year you rock up at the Carnival and the group has doubled. The year after they have to separate the men and women because the groups have grown and now some Carnivals are at a point where they need to separate the age groups. Recently a group of us have broken away to challenge ourselves at the Multi-events, excellent fun I must add. As we look back towards the remainder of the Masters group we notice that it is still packed out and many new faces have joined the group.

Make sure at Club level that Masters are treated just like any other age group as far as end of season awards are concerned. Most will say “pfft... don’t worry about it” but remember we are all still athletes and secretly don’t mind a bit of recognition. PB and attendance based points systems are best as it puts all competitors no matter their ability on an even playing field.

Make sure any media releases your Club may get include all aspects of the sport, kids, masters, achievers, record breakers and PB’ers. This way all the locals start to realise that athletics isn’t

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just for kids and then you will start to see the enquiries from people considering returning to the sport. When they hit you with the line “I might get fit and then come back” the reply should be do it to get fit don’t wait to get fit to do it.

Keep in mind that Master athletes can be a Clubs best asset. They are usually parents so they increase membership with their family, they learn the rules so they are potential coaches and officials and if nothing else they will be part of the Clubs workforce and so will want to keep “their” Club running smoothly.

Be patient, at first numbers will grow slowly and then take off like a pyramid scheme. Lead by example – don’t expect others to do what you won’t, this way we can all enjoy “ATHLETICS FOR LIFE”.

Ken Dickson
Master Athlete