

## **FRIENDLY AND EFFICIENT HOBART NATIONALS.**

*(Report by Bryan Thomas ACTVAC).*

Many visiting athletes, especially those at the last national championships held in Hobart and indeed the local organising committee, were concerned that cold and/or wet conditions might be a problem for these 35<sup>th</sup> AMA Championships. However, the weather throughout Easter could not have been better with daily temperatures ranging from 17 to 24 degrees and sun-cream more likely to be needed than jackets.

This was the fourth occasion Tasmania has hosted our Australian Championships, the first being in 1985, then 1992 and the third was the infamously cold and windy carnival in 2000. All three previous championships were characterised by being efficiently conducted by friendly officials and volunteers and this Easter the Tasmanian Masters Athletics club further enhanced their deserved reputation. The many junior athletes clad in bright yellow T/shirts doing all sorts of tasks were greatly appreciated by competitors. Hopefully they enjoyed the experience and were inspired by observing the outstanding efforts of athletes many decades older than themselves. Two other aspects of these championships won widespread approval; they were efficient medal presentations that immediately followed the completion of every event and the absence of a call room.

Not only was Hobart blessed with beautiful warm autumn weather and efficient and friendly personnel but organisers also had the use of excellent venues. The Domain Athletic Centre located on top of a hill above the Botanical Gardens and city with Mt Wellington dominating the background makes this track and field venue one of the most picturesque in the country. The Centre was also the venue for the AMA Board Meeting prior to competition and the Coaches' and Athletes' Forums. The 8km cross-country held in the area surrounding the stadium was popular with runners, many of whom commented after the race that the course was a little easier than they had imagined but a good test for off-track running. The 10km and 20km road walks were conducted on an almost level stretch of smooth traffic free road through the middle of Kempton, an attractive little village about 45km NW of Hobart. The Dinner- Dance and Awards Evening is always a highlight and the Tasmanian LOC again organised an excellent social occasion – this time in the ballroom of the Hotel Grand Chancellor over looking Constitution Dock.

The LOC were thrilled that 431 competitors, almost a hundred more than in 2000 and only about sixty less than in Canberra last year, entered the championships. Victoria had the largest contingent with exactly 100 athletes, followed by the hosts with 96, NSW 92, Queensland 61, ACT 30, WA and SA 26 each, Northern Territory 1 and 3 from NZ.

Approximately 37.5% of participants were women; Western Australia had the ideal - equal numbers of men and women in their team while Queensland with 44.2% and the ACT 42.2% had the next best female representation. Most popular age group for men was M45 with 44 participants just three more than M65 while for women the W40 and W60 each had 24.

Older age groups were well represented with eleven M80s and three W80s. The remarkable and inspirational Ruth Frith from Queensland at 97 years-of-age was the most senior competitor as she has been for so many championships, while Victorian M85 Ken Matchett was the oldest male. Ruth and daughter Helen Searle featured in a story and photograph displaying the eleven gold medals won between them on the front page of the Hobart Mercury. Unfortunately M90 Victorian Andy Smith was unable to make it to Hobart and so sadly broke a unique and historic string of having participated in every national championship since they commenced in 1973.

Hobart witnessed the introduction of three new events – 60m dash, three age bands for relays and the 20km road walk available for all race walkers. With the addition of the 60m, sprinters are now even better catered for with a sprint each day. The 200m was the most popular event with 120 nominations, the 100m had 118 and the 5000m 117. Women favoured the discus throw with 51 entries, closely followed by the 200m with 50, javelin 49 and shot and 100m 48 apiece; on the other hand men were more attracted to the 5000m and cross country with 78 and 74 entries respectively. Least popular events were the 20km walk (9 men and 3 women) and the women's pole vault with only two participants. Increasing popularity of the throws pentathlon creates logistical difficulties for organisers, but the 81 men and 37 women who participated in Hobart were pleased with how the event was conducted.

The average competitor entered four and a half events but some participated in many more. Most active were M75 Rad Leovic (ACT) with 15 events, M65 Don Chambers (Vic) 14, M45 Mark Cepak (NSW) 13 and M55 Rob Antonioli (WA) 12; while a pair of W40s Jennifer Baldwin (Vic) and Sharon Moloney (WA) were the busiest women completing ten events each. Most of these fit, enthusiastic and multi-talented athletes also included the pentathlon and/or throws pentathlon in their program. M70 New Zealander Ron Johnson,

renowned for the number and variety of events he usually participates in championships, this year restricted himself to just eight. His explanation was that his preparation had not been ideal for serious competition because he had only just got off a cruise on the Queen Mary. Oh how awful!

These championships, like all before them, had its share of outstanding performances. Western Australian race walker Lyn Ventris who recently moved up to the W50 age group set two new World Records – 5000mW (23.37.78) and 10km road walk (48.27); times most athletes her age dream of achieving in a run let alone maintaining the technically difficult gait of race walking.

Apart from Lyn's World Records there were many new Australian and Championship Records set and of course even many more PBs achieved.

Listed is just a sample of some other outstanding individual performances - M70 Hugh Coogan (Q) 60m 8.50 and 200m 27.77, M75 Jack Thackray (ACT) 60m 9.47 and 100m 15.33, W45 Julie Forster (NSW) 200m 26.42 and W40 Gianna Mogentale (NSW) 100m 12.37 and 400m 58.09 in the sprints; middle distance runners M70 David Carr (WA) 800m 2.34 and 1500m 5.29, M45 John Jago (T) 1500m 4.14, W45 Victoria Gunn (T) 800m 2.38 and 1500m 5.06 and W60 Peggy Macliver (WA) 800m 2.58; long distance runners M70 Colin McLeod (Q) 2000m steeple 8.48 and 5000m 20.26, M65 Peter Sandery (SA) 10000m 37.40 and 5000m 18.36, W40 Glenda Banaghan (Q) 10000m 35.48 and 5000m 17.05 and W55 Bronwen Cardy (V) 10000m 37.50 and 5000m 18.52; hurdlers M65 MikeStevenson (T) 100mH 16.95 and W45 Marie Kay (Q) 80mH 12.72; race walkers M45 Mark Donahoo 5000W 24.19 and 20kmW 1.54.52 and W55 Heather Carr (V) 5000W 26.01 and 10kmW 54.53; jumpers M45 Volodymyr Shelever (NSW) high jump 1.76m and triple jump 11.79m, W45 Marie Kay (Q) long jump 5.08m and W35 Kylie Strong (NSW) long jump 5.07m and triple 10.29m; and throwers M55 Bob Banens (ACT) javelin 47.39m, M40 Stuart Gingell (NSW) shot 15.82m and discus 44.81m, M60 Graeme Rose (V) heavy weight 18.33m, W55 Lisa Kirsch (T) hammer 46.14m and shot 11.40m and W30 Byrony Glass (WA) hammer 53.93m and heavy weight 16.41m.

Two special "Champion of Champions" events are always features at the national championships. The Champion of Champions sprint, first conducted in 1987, is a handicapped 100m race for the best eight age-graded performances for both men and women run in the 100m finals. South Australian 78year-old Ann Cooper won in a close photo finish from W40 Gianna Mogentale. This was Ann's fifth victory in this prestigious event, having previously won last year and also in 2002, 03 and 04. M70 Hugh Coogan (Q) was the winner of the men's race. The other Champion of Champions event is a handicap throwing competition, first held in 1999, in which winners of each age group are invited to participate. This year shot put was the designated throw. W55 Lisa Kirsch (T) won the women's event while M40 Stuart Gingell (NSW) was male champion.

The Royce Foley Award, introduced 1996, is presented to the male and female with the highest point score in the weight pentathlon, but may only be awarded to the same athlete once during each five-year age group. W65 Jan Banens (ACT) and M65 Keith James (NSW) were the 2007 recipients.

Highlight of the Sunday evening dinner-dance is always the presentation of the annual AMA "Asics" Awards for outstanding athletic performances achieved in the previous year (2006). Finalists for each of the eleven categories are nominated by each state or territory and the winner is announced in an Academy Award style keeping the audience guessing. This year's winners are – M60 Peter Crombie (NSW) sprints/hurdles, M80 Norm Pearce (Q) middle distance, W65 Theresa Baird (V) distance, M60 Andrew Jamieson (V) walks, M40 Stuart Gingell (NSW) throws, W35 Irie Hill (V) jumps, W40 Julie Brims (Q) multi/relays, M60 Robin Whyte (ACT) most outstanding performance, W45 Marie Kay (Q) most outstanding female athlete, M70 Hugh Coogan (Q) most outstanding male athlete and Frank Rogers (SA) administrator/official of the year.

Being part of the nationals is not only about athletics. Just as important is the socialising at the venues and at the dinner-dance as well taking time to explore another city and state. Many visiting athletes enjoyed dining in the numerous and excellent seafood restaurants and takeaways on the Hobart waterfront then after the championships setting out for a holiday to various attractions throughout Tasmania.

Thanks Tassie. Now we look forward to the 36<sup>th</sup> AMA Championships to be held at Blacktown Olympic Park (NSW) next Easter and the 2008 Oceania Masters Athletics Championships in Townsville (FNQ) in late July/early August next year. See you there.