

## **Biography of the Marge Allison** (including both sporting and personal history)

Marge Allison was born on 13th September 1944 in Hamilton, New Zealand, the youngest of six children (3 boys and 3 girls). Outdoor activities and sport were encouraged as a part of a balanced life and Marge can particularly remember how much she enjoyed running barefoot on the grass.

In her early teens she developed a love of Netball, in the winter months and Athletics during the summer and it became the responsibility of two of her older brothers to take turns in walking her the three miles to and from their home to the athletics oval each week.

Marge's highest achievement in Open Athletics was 3rd place at National Level in each of 80m Hurdles, High Jump and Pentathlon.

After leaving school Marge successfully completed a 3 year apprenticeship in Dressmaking. She married in January 1966 and dedicated herself to raising her three children, Donna - Marie, Paul and Geraldine.

In November 1980 she heard about the 4th World Veteran Athletics Championships that were to be held in Christchurch in January 1981 and was encouraged to do some serious training, for 8 weeks and compete. That was the beginning of her return to the sport that she loved and enjoyed.

In 1983 Marge relocated to Sydney with her children when her marriage broke down. She joined the NSW Veterans Athletics Club and competed in her first Australian competition in March 1984, the NSW State Titles, followed by going to Canberra the following month to compete in the Oceania Championships where she set her first record on Australian soil in the 400 metres and finished 2nd in the 100m and 200m at the same meet. We believe that this record still stands today.

Upon arriving in Australia, Marge utilised her love of fabrics and dressmaking and became the NSW Sales Manager for a Victorian Knitting Mill. Hard work and dedication afforded her the opportunity of a comfortable and increasingly profitable lifestyle and in May 1997 she became an Australian citizen.

Marge retired from work in 2004 and together with her partner, left Sydney and spent the following 12 months travelling around Australia. On the way home, they arrived on the Sunshine Coast and loved the lifestyle and place so much decided to make this wonderful part of their world home.

Marge commenced 'serious' athletics training once settled and could be found at the University of the Sunshine Coast track at 7am each Monday and Wednesday, along with nobody else except the local Kangaroo community, often up to 15, who strategically placed themselves both inside, outside and often on the track! They seemed to have a love of the top bend of the track, which often forced Marge to adjust her programme to 200 metres as majority rules!

Throughout her career she has been fortunate to experience the knowledge and differing methods of five fantastic coaches.

Jack Pross, Harry Stanley, Fred O'Connor (who coached her to her first individual World Record in the 45-49 400m hurdles), and the late Colin Cooper, coaching by correspondence. During this time she achieved several world records competing in the 50-54 age in the 200m, 400m and 800m.

For the past twenty plus years she has been coached by correspondence by Peter Crombie and has set new World Records in 60-64 age group 300m Hurdles, in addition to the Oceania, Australian and Australian Masters Athletics - Hall of Fame Athlete Nomination - Marge Allison page 3/27

Queensland records in the Heptathlon. World records in 65-69 age group 300m Hurdles and 4x400m relay. Most recently the World Record in W70-74 age group 200m Hurdles.

Despite this amazing dedication to the sport of Masters Athletics Marge is a member of the Maroochydore Surf Life Saving Club and has successfully completed her level one coaching accreditation. She gives freely of her time to coach Nippers sprints and flags. Marge also officiates at beach carnivals over several weekends during the summer months.

Marge is arguably Australia's most prolific female medal winner at a World level over many years.

She has demonstrated her versatility setting 17 World records in 7 events. 15 of these are individual and 2 relays. These events are, 200m, 400m, 800m, 200m hurdles, 300m hurdles, 400m hurdles and 4x400m relay

At the local level Marge has again been a prolific medal winner and in the process has set an astonishing 42 Australian records in 12 events. The events include, 60m hurdles (indoors), 80m hurdles, 100m, 2000m steeplechase, high jump, long jump (indoors), Pentathlon, Heptathlon, 4x100m, 4x200, (indoors), 4x800m and 4x1500m relays. These records illustrate the versatility in Marge's athletics performances and achievements.

It comes as no surprise that Marge has set 23 NSW state records and 18 Queensland state records.

Marge has always been a supporter of the Australian Championships and entered and competed in as many events as the programme and her body allows for. She has won 46 National titles and placed 2nd on 14 occasions.

There have been many highlights in the athletics career of Marge Allison with more to come:

- Running a one and only Marathon in 1982 Honolulu.
- Flag bearer at the Opening Ceremony at the World Championships in Buffalo in 1995, such an honour in the front row of 81 countries before a capacity stadium.
- Experiencing drug testing after breaking the 400m World Record in Buffalo in 58.51 and being the first 50 year old woman in history to run a sub 60sec 400m.
- Being nominate and becoming a finalist in 1996 for the Prime Ministerial Women and Sport Award.
- Setting a new World Record in the 300m Hurdles W60-64 age in 2005, San Sebastian and two gold medals in the 200m and 400m
- Setting a new Australian Record in 2008 in the 4x800m with three Queensland friends – Betty Menzies, Jean Hampson and Irene Davey. And only 4 seconds (1 seconds each) off the World mark
- Setting a new Oceania, Australian and Queensland records in her first Heptathlon at

Townsville at the Oceania Championships in 2008.

- Winning the John Landy Trophy in “The Landy Gift” 2010 where it was said Marge became only the second woman to win “The Landy”. Hugh Coogan held the three fastest times recorded in the Landy final. Her time of 45.34sec for the age-graded 400 metres to be the next best in the events 11 year history of the event.
- Breaking the World Record W65-69 300m Hurdles at the World Championships in Sacramento in 2011. Winning the 400m, winning the 4x100m relay with an Australian Record, another World Record in 4x400m relay.
- Pan Pacific Masters Games 2014 breaking eight records in four events, 100m, 200m, 200m Hurdles, 400m. Three Queensland, three Pan Pacific, an Australian and World Record in W70 200m Hurdles

### **Personal Testimonial on behalf of Marge Allison**

I first met Marge at my first World Masters Athletics Championships in Riccione, Italy in 2007. Marge was and still continues to be an elite masters’ athlete, having won countless world titles both indoors and outdoors and set numerous World, National and State records.

Marge is the consummate professional and her passion and commitment to the sport of athletics and her training partners, serves as an inspiration for other athletes and coaches across the world.

The fact that she was the first female 50+ athlete to run a sub 60sec 400m is testimony to Marge’s dedication and commitment. Marge has continued to demonstrate consistent world class performances for some 32 years, these include her 17 World Records across 7 events and her 59 Australian records across 19 different events.

Marge has won a staggering 34 individual World Championship medals, this includes 22 Gold Medals. It is performances of this calibre that largely contributed to Marge being such an outstanding role model for women and the sport of athletics.

What is even more remarkable is that the Australian Indoor long jump record W65 set by Marge was set in the Pentathlon competition in 2010.

Those closer to Marge know however, that there is much more to Marge, than just the medals and records of her illustrious career. Marge genuinely cares for her fellow athletes. Whilst clearly enjoying her successes she is always quick to encourage her opponents and fellow athletes and she willingly offers coaching advice to those who are interested particularly in highly technical events such as hurdling.

Marge is someone with exceptional personal qualities. There are many athletes and individuals who would, without hesitation, back up my assertion that Marge is someone who applies high moral standards to the way she lives her life. She is a role model for others and a beacon in the sport of athletics and in life more generally without exception leading from the front and by example.

A truly gracious and understated lady who brings glamour to the sport with her unique and

fashionable competition uniforms, she regularly takes on the role of spokesperson for women's issues in sport generally.

Marge's integrity and her actions are examples to others. I and all others I know who have had dealings with Marge, both in the world of athletics and beyond have always found her to be a woman of her word and someone who always follows through on her commitments. In the athletics sphere, this has been reflected in her total dedication to supporting the interests of other athletes. Marge is often the athlete who 'runs' in younger age groups and anchors Australian relay teams into gold medal positions, giving other athletes the opportunity to medal at World Championship level, an opportunity which would never be a possibility for some in an individual event.

To the outside observer Marge's relaxed and easy going personality is not a true reflection of the Australian Masters Athletics - Hall of Fame Athlete Nomination - Marge Allison page 18/27

many hours she dedicates to her training and helping others. Whether it is on the track, at hills, in the gym, at water running or swimming, surf ski paddling or Pilates her dedication is second to none.

In 1999 Marge had a major knee operation and was told by her doctors that she would never run again. With her never say die attitude she overcame that setback and returned to international competition and won multiple gold medals and World Records and the like since. Marge again had main knee surgery in 2013 and has subsequently set World Records in highly technical events.

A great promoter of the sport of athletics, Marge is always looking for opportunities in which to do this in the broader community. For over 30 years she has featured in local newspapers and newsletters.

Marge has made a point over many years of always being on time, prepared and organised regardless of her health, the weather or other responsibilities in life.

Marge's dedication to the sport, as well as to her family, friends and other interests outside the sport, has come from a profound respect for others. I have come to realise that Marge enjoys helping others try to achieve their goals.

It is a testimony that she has achieved such success as she often trains on her own and is coached remotely. This together with the fact that she has been able to set multiple World, Australian and State records in the absence of competition, always giving the best from herself.

It should by now be clear to all in the sport of Masters Athletics that there are very few indeed who have performed at the highest level over such an extended period of time.

It is for these reasons that Marge Allison would be a very deserving member of the AMA Hall of Fame.