

# **Punching above our weight**

## **Aussie assault on the 4th World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships**

**Kamloops, BC, Canada, 1-6 March 2010**

*By Janet Naylor and Stuart Paterson*

Forty Australians entered the fourth edition of the World Masters Indoor Athletics Championships. Thirty-six arrived and competed, thirty took home at least one medal in our overall count of 63 (21 Gold, 22 Silver 20 Bronze) and two, Marie Kay and Heather Carr, achieved world records. Full results for the team are on the AMA website.

So where is Kamloops? It is at the junction of the North Thompson and South Thompson rivers and was established in the early 1800s. It was the focus of the inland fur trade until the mining boom of the 1860s. Ranchers with cattle and horses followed then two railways. It was a 50 minute flight from Vancouver or a scenic 5 hour bus ride through the Rocky Mountains.

The competition venue was the Tournament Capital Centre which is in the grounds of the Thompson Rivers University. This multi-purpose facility included a flat six-lane 200m track. The eight lane 60m track was outside the 200m track as the infield was three basketball courts which were covered with tartan for the high jump, shot put and weight throw. Also in the centre there was a 50m indoor pool, water slide, gymnastics centre, various weights rooms, gyms and a 'wellness centre'. All this in a town with a population of 85,000.

The warm up area was the adjacent outdoor eight-lane track so it was just as well that temperatures were about 15 degrees higher than normal; even so warming up on a frosty morning was not pleasant. The infield was a lovely soft astro turf grid iron field. We had been assured snow would be cleared from the track if necessary! Lack of access to appropriate warm up areas continues to be a problem at WMA meets and is something athletes need to be flexible about and be able to improvise if intending to compete at these events.

Likewise access to the venue for training prior to the competition was limited. As is the Australian way, most athletes were, unofficially, able to gain access! Again, this is a recurring problem at WMA events and is something athletes need to be aware of when planning a trip.

Competition commenced on 1 March and finished with the relays on 6 March. In a very compact program, athletes compete indoors in the 60m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1500m, 3000m, 3000m walk, 60m hurdles, 4x200m relay, horizontal and vertical jumps, shot put, weight throw and indoor pentathlon (60m hurdles, high jump, shot put, long jump, 800m for women/1000m for men). Events also conducted as part of the program, outdoors, include the 8km cross country, half marathon, 10km road walk, javelin, discus and hammer throws.

With high entry numbers and only six lanes on the circular track, the progressions through the rounds can be very harsh and for those thinking of going to Jyväskylä, Finland for the next indoors the circular track is only four lanes but banked! Running on a banked track is easier but the progressions will be even more cut-throat.

The events were well officiated and there were plenty of friendly volunteers to assist, including Kris Wardecki. Kris, who was wearing the green and gold for the first time having previously represented Poland, had a few days free between events and is to be commended for helping out.

We ended up as the Aussie team managers after a casual conversation with Wilma Perkins in Lahti about our future interest in team management. Little did we expect that three months later we would be notified of our appointment for Kamloops. It certainly was interesting to see another side of competition at this

level, with attendance at daily team manager meetings and having an input to improving the way aspects of the competition were conducted.

Janet applied for media accreditation as a freelance journalist and photographer, representing Athletics NSW, which gave us access to computers in the media centre and therefore results before they were on noticeboards. It also gave Janet access to the field of play. The challenge, though, was getting good action photos in the low light conditions and it took a few sessions experimenting with shutter speeds, apertures and ISO ratings to achieve a reasonable image!

Away from the track we had some opportunities to experience the local ways. We were all amazed at how friendly the local Kamloopians were – everyone in town knew about the World Championships. Team members were offered lifts, use of a vehicle, sightseeing tours and tips on ice fishing.

Kamloops Blazers is the local ice hockey team, which plays in the semi-professional Western Hockey League. They had two home games while we were in town. What was amazing was that the town supports this U20 team with a dedicated venue and 5000+ spectators at home games. Look out for a certain Aussie working in Parramatta and wearing a Blazers jersey! Afterwards we got a lift back to our hotel with Bonnie and Lois in their Cadillac.

There was also a trip to the local ski fields, Sun Peaks Resort, for snow shoeing, to check out the world cup down hill speed skiing event and a spot of ice fishing! And last but perhaps the most hilarious, was our attempt at curling with an impromptu lesson before heading off for the long trip home.

### Imagery

W40 4x200 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= 85MFmmyZ5s>

