

## 2014 WMA Indoor Track Field Championships

Words by Janet Naylor, Team Manager, Photos by Stuart Paterson and Janet Naylor

A record 50 Australians competed at the 6th World Masters Indoor Track and Field Championships, which were held in Budapest, Hungary from 25-30 March 2014.

More than half the team were competing at their first indoor competition, while some were competing at their first ever world masters championships and we were lucky to have two Hungarian speakers on the team – NSW athletes, Lajos Joni and Kriszta Kovacs. Both attracted surprised looks from the officials when they spoke in Hungarian at event sites!

Competition was held at the SYMA Sport and Event Centre, which had two indoor tracks. Hall A had a 6-lane banked track, which is portable and built for specific events. It was assembled much like a jigsaw puzzle over 55 hours and was completed ahead of schedule and with IAAF certification! Hall B is a permanent 4-lane banked track. The surface was similar on both tracks, however the main track was 'bouncy' and noisy due to its entire construction on boards.

Next to SYMA was an outdoor track for the winter throwing events, training and warm-up, while Városliget (City Park) was the venue for the non-stadia events – 10 km road walk, half marathon and cross country.

Budapest really did awaken from winter as pitched in the promo material. After a cold start, the days were mostly warm and sunny with temperatures around 15-20 degrees, which was a bonus for the outdoor events.

Rad Leovic (ACT), who had previously represented at Indoors in 2008 and 2010 and is a multiple medallist, was thrilled and honoured to be chosen as our flag bearer at the Opening Ceremony. The ceremony was quite short and held in the main competition arena with a parade of nations, Hungarian national dances and a few speeches. This was the first time athletes were able to set foot on the main track as it was literally completed that afternoon.

The indoor program is short and intense with early morning starts and late night finishes to fit in multiple rounds for most events. The first day saw competition on the cross country course while indoors; the pentathlons were in progress along with the early rounds of the 60 metres and 800 metres.

Our first gold medallist\* was Peter Sandery (SA) in the M70 8km Cross Country with a fast time of 32:54.30 minutes. Day 1 finished with the M85 Pentathlon 1000 metres and our second gold medal to Rad Leovic (ACT) with a massive 2,231 points. Rad went on to collect numerous medals, including a second gold in the M85 Pole Vault with a clearance of 1.00 metre on Day 3.

It was a gold rush on Day 2 as we saw a number of our throwers and jumpers in action, the finals of the 60 metres, the 3000 metres walk and second round of the 800 metres.

Neville McIntyre (NSW) won the M70 60 metres in 8.60s. It is the first time he has competed in the World Masters Indoor Championships and he was suitably impressed with the venue and atmosphere. Neville won a second gold medal in the M70 200 metres in 28.56s on Day 4.

Victorians Mark Donahoo (M55) and Heather Carr (W60) showed how good Australia is at the walks with wins in their respective 3000 metre events. Mark won in 14:17.18 while Heather's winning time was 16:18.25. Heather also won a second gold medal in the 10km road walk on the penultimate day of competition in just under the hour, 58:44.10 minutes.

Day 3 was the 200 metre preliminaries and semis, a number of throwing and jumping events and the 3000 metre timed finals.

Day 4 was a big day with yet more field events, the 200



Waiting for the Opening Ceremony



Left - Rad Leovic, Right - W60 800m winner, Jeanette Flynn



M70 60m final - second from left - Neville McIntyre

metre and 800 metre finals and preliminaries of the 60 metre hurdles. Stand out performer was Jeanette Flynn in the W60 800 metres. In a dominant display, Jeanette went to the front and was not challenged. She won in 2:41.40. This was in contrast to her win in the 1500 metres on the final day where Jeanette sat back in the pack and then sprinted for home over the closing stages to win in 5:45.40.

The penultimate day included competition in the 10km road walk, 1500 metre preliminaries, 400 metre preliminaries and semi finals, 60 metre hurdle finals and a range of jumps and throws.

The final day, Day 6, started with the half marathon and finished with the 4x200 metre relays. In between were the final groups of throws and jumps, 1500 metre finals and 400 metre finals.

After strong performances in the 60 metres (silver) and the 200 metres (4th), Gianna Mogentale ran the perfect race to take out the W50 400 metres. She led from the gun and was never headed, crossing the line in 62.20s. She said she had not slept well the night before, rehearsing the race in her mind "a million times." These championships were the first time she had run indoors and she was surprised how different it felt with the dry air and compact environment.

Competition concluded with the relays – indoors it is 4x200 metres and it is run like a 4x400 with the second runner crossing over. It is strategic, lots of fun and important to be in front with the tight bends. Australia fielded four women's teams and two men's teams. Teams were grateful for the throwers and walkers who agreed to make up numbers and/or be reserves.

The W60 and W65 teams both claimed silver medals with the W60 team (Lynne Choate, Wilma Perkins, Linda Lynch, Jeanette Flynn) under the previous world record but behind Great Britain. The W45 team finished 6th and broke the Australian record by 9 seconds while the W40 team placed 8th. The M65 team placed 6th while the M40 team (Wayne Marriott, Campbell McLennan, Paul O'Neill, Dean Nipperess) ran 1:48.59 to break the existing Athletics Australia (open) record of 1:51.99. At the time of writing the paperwork was still being processed.

While our Hungarians didn't win medals, they both revelled in competing in their hometown with family and friends supporting them.

As a school girl Kriszta Kovacs had run cross country in City Park and here she was representing Australia having recently taken up masters athletics. After the cross country she said, "I had so much fun! So good to run as an Australian. There were many cheering friends, it was a great atmosphere." Her best result was 7th in the W40 1500 metres where she felt as if she was "flying" on the indoor track. Kriszta's parents, husband and children, who were all present, were very proud.

Lajos Joni came to Australia 48 years ago and on this trip 'home' his parents and sister accompanied him. A talented decathlete, he now competes in the throws and had a huge fan club of family and friends supporting him. His best result was 8th in the hammer with 44.21m.

As is now tradition at Indoors, a team gathering was organised on the last night, which was attended by over 40 people including family, friends and 'ring-ins' from England and Germany. Kriszta organised the restaurant, which is run by her former training partner, Peter. He took a keen interest in the Australian team and was happy to host us and provided tasting plates of local Hungarian dishes. As is also tradition, some Australians found their way to the British team party later in the evening.

\* This report covers the Australian gold medallists - results at <http://www.world-masters-athletics.org/news/509-budapest-complete-results>.



W50 400m winner, Gianna Mogentale



Left - M65 800m heats - Allan Mayfield and Kevin Solomon;  
Right - M40 1500m final - Campbell McLennan



W40 1500m final - Kriszta Kovacs