

Have I Earned My Keep?

Wilma Perkins

The 1980's saw me on the Queensland Masters Athletics Committee and that came about because I asked about getting some additional events on the local competition program. The advice I was given was to get myself on the committee if I wanted changes. The 1990's saw me attending the AMA AGM as a Queensland delegate and in 1998 I became an AMA Board member. So what did I work to achieve?

1. One false start rule – otherwise masters would be the same as IAAF where a false start has the athlete disqualified immediately.
2. Lower hurdles for women. In 1999 I was onstage at the WMA General Assembly at Gateshead with Winston Thomas from Gt Britain fighting for lower hurdles. At that stage ALL women went over the same height hurdles as the Olympians.
3. Chaired the AMA hurdles sub committee to look at modifications to hurdles with ageing. This led to hurdle trials at weekly competitions so that we could speak with experience on what suited athletes as they progressed through the age groups. This eventually resulted in changes at the world level with the introduction of the 300m hurdles for 50+ and the 200m hurdles for W70 and M80 and several other changes to hurdle specifications particularly for women.
4. Changes to the W75+ throws specifications to lighter implements – an idea that was brought to me by Ruth Frith who asked if I could do something about the fact that women had the same specifications whether they were 50 or 100. At the WMA General Assembly I presented a case for this to occur at W70. Some other countries argued for W80 so we compromised and agreed on W75 which is what we wanted anyhow.
5. Supported Roy Foley to have the 700g javelin introduced at WMA level for M50+. This took repeated notices of motion by Australia at the WMA General Assembly to get this change. In 1984 women threw the 600g javelin and at W50 they changed to the 400g. Eventually the 500g javelin was introduced for W50.
6. Responsible for changing the WMA championship field event schedule from the previous system of having all age groups in the same field event on the same day to different age groups doing different field events on the same day. As a member of the LOC for the WMA Championships in Brisbane in 2001 I was in charge of the program and with the support of the LOC maximised the use of circles and pits on any one day.
7. Introduction of appropriate starting heights and increments in pole vault and high jump. This came about as a result of discussions with Lesley Daniels from Australia and Mary Trotta from the US. Previously starting heights were often beyond the ability of some entrants and the increments were too great such as 5cm in high jump regardless of whether you were M35 or W80. Unfortunately there are some people in our sport who still do not comprehend this and think that the quicker you eliminate everyone the better even though they have all paid entry fees.
8. Put forward the idea of AMA awards at a Board meeting in 1998 which was approved but no one volunteered for the job. The President said as I thought of it then I

could do it and have done ever since with some refinements over the years. At that time I was also responsible for masters nominations to the Confederation of Sport and by 2004 Oceania nominations to the WMA for the best athlete awards. I am proud of the fact that Oceania nominations have won a high percentage of these awards.

9. Introduced the idea of maintaining a record of our Australian flag bearers. Unfortunately the list is not complete due to no information being found from earlier years

10. Provided opportunities at AMA Championships in relays for athletes to attempt World Records.

11. In Malaga I attended the WMA Records committee meeting and represented Oceania. I put forward the motion that 4 x 800m World Records should be in 5 year age groups and not the 10 year age groups that were in place. The 5 year age groups will also apply to the Indoor 4 x 400m and 4 x 800m which were also in 10 year age groups.

12. On becoming AMA president I applied pressure to the then treasurer to provide actual details and bank statements of the finances with no concept on what would play out in the following months. The one positive from this is that AMA now have a much better and secure accounting system in place.

13. My programming interest was activated from competing at a world championship and having three events at three different stadiums within the same hour. I worked with Bob Schickert on the program and schedule for Perth and with the Daegu LOC on their program and schedule and was responsible solely for the one in Brisbane in 2001 where only 5 athletes out of 5000 had a clash of events.

14. Worked with Peter Crombie to establish guidelines for selecting relay teams for World Championships and at Oceania. Those guidelines are for the best possible outcomes for Australia.

15. Worked behind the scenes to change the selection criteria for the WMA Awards. Lynne Schickert was able to progress this so that WMA recognises similar categories to AMA. Work is still going on to improve the nomination form data.

16. Providing support for the masters rankings website and gaining financial support for the website from WMA

17. Encouraged the maintenance of historical records of our past administrators

18. Helped push forward the introduction of the 60m event into our AMA Championships program and at Oceania level after the introduction of the WMA Indoors where 60m was part of that program.

19. Tracked down and added christian names to the to Oceania Championship Records when previously only an initial was shown

20. Attended the WMA Women's Committee Meeting in 1987 and from 1993 I have attended continuously. I have been the Oceania women's representative for about half

that time. At the Malaga Championships I was elected to be the Chair of the Women's Committee.

21. I served on the WMA Stadia Committee from 1999-2018 and on the OMA Council for a similar time .

22. When President of QMA, oversaw the purchase of the QMA clubhouse which is located at trackside near the 200m start and the first QMA golf buggy to carry equipment.

23. More recently I have researched a list of the poles that should be available at WMA Championships. Malaga was an excellent example of why such a list is needed.

24. Over the past 19 years I have been one of Australia's five delegates at the WMA General Assembly.

25. I have regularly been one of the Australian relay selectors.

26. I introduce the AMA Expenses claim form that is now in use

27. I also introduced an AMA Championship medal tally form to keep tabs on the number of gold, silver and bronze medals needed at AMA Championships but this has not been used in recent years.

On a personal level over the years I have been involved in establishing 183 state records, 81 national records and 7 world records. Being jack of all trades and master of none I have managed to win 102 world championship medals across 20 different track and field events, something of which I am very proud.

In reflection I believe I have earned my keep as an administrator and I leave it to others to carry on. The new Board will commence with 13 years experience between them and this is great for new ideas and a fresh approach but I recommend that all do their homework and learn the history of masters in Australia so that all are aware of what has been tried before and why it did or did not work.

Not just the Board but delegates, administrators and athletes as well, take the time to understand how WMA, OMA and AMA link together and how a united sport can be stronger sport.