

## Stuart Paterson – AMA Board Member

Rugby and cricket were the first sports my parents signed me up for at high school in England. The next year I switched to social cross-country and tennis! Late in the season I was asked to run for the school team as they were short. School had already checked with my parents and found a uniform for me; I finished second just behind our school's best runner. That was the start of many Saturdays spent at athletics for the next 50 plus years.

In my last year at school I represented Kent in Track, Cross Country and also Race Walks and collected a school academic prize. Thus proving that balance between sport and academics is important. I ran for Kent about 8 times as a junior, captained the team for English Schools T&F Champs in 1975 and picked up a couple of county titles. Whilst at school I joined the Tonbridge Athletics Club and ran for them in the holidays mainly, until I finished at Uni.

One of my fondest memories is the 4X400 relay at a Southern League match. Our possible promotion to division 2 came down to this race. Our first runner was a 40+ athlete and Commonwealth Games rep for Mauritius who was running sub 50, I was a junior 800/1500 runner, I cannot remember the open runner and our last runner was a female 4X400 Commonwealth Games Gold medallist. The opposition looked at us and thought we had no chance. We won and got promoted to Div 2 where the Club is still to this day.

I was at Birmingham University in what is often referred to as the 'Golden Years'. The University record for 800m was close to the GB record and faster than the AUS record and our 1500m record was the GB record at the time. University was my introduction to committees as I was vice captain of cross-country, on the Hall of Residents bar and shop committees plus on the university events committee – the biggest band we put on was Leonard Skynyrd at the Birmingham Odeon. I was running twice a day and also spent a lot of time climbing and mountaineering (right – on a frozen waterfall in North Wales).

After Uni, I joined Arthur Andersen to become a chartered accountant, something I think my parents wanted more than I did. At this time I joined Birchfield Harriers who were British League Div 1 and that was an eye opener. Watching Daley Thompson (Essex Beagles) score over half his entire club's points in an afternoon was amazing especially when he ran 47 for 400m as his 8th event.

Probably my most treasured medal is the English National Open Silver won with Birchfield in the 12-stage road relay. I ran a short (3 mile) leg. The final (6 mile) leg was a who's who of British distance running with everyone from Brendan Foster to Ian Stewart to Nick Rose, Ray Smedley and other notables competing. Bristol won and we were clearly disappointed at second and Tipton Harriers massively disappointed at third. However, we were all at the same pub that evening to celebrate. The social aspect of athletics is something I do miss about England.



I left the UK to travel in the early 80s. One interesting experience was a fun run in Canyon de Chelly National Monument and Indian Reservation in the USA. I was about the only non-indigenous runner in the race and at the end they wanted to make me a blood brother as I finished close to the front. It was a hard 10km through sand and water criss-crossing the river. Some runners were wearing the Indian flaps back and front and some were wearing the latest Nike gear not yet seen in the UK.

*Leading the start of the English National Cross Country Championships in my first year of open competition - I'm in black wearing S8 on the right and Steve Ovett is 747 far left.*

Once in Australia I joined Ryde Hornsby and soon after went to the national cross-country championships in Hobart 1982 with the NSW team where I chased some guy called Rob De Castella having no idea who he was! That day Lawrie Whitty won and was probably the only Aussie to beat Rob at XC in a 10 year stretch. There were big celebrations that night!

I ended up running for NSW about 8 times over track, XC and 25km road and have a few AA open team medals as a result. I changed clubs to University of NSW and then UTS Norths in the early 90s and went onto the club committee as club captain for a number of years. I am now a life member of Norths and also a life member of Athletics NSW. I wanted to give a bit more back to the sport that has taken me to all continents to race, except Antarctica, so I started officiating in 1997 in the lead up to the Sydney 2000 Olympics where I worked in the TIC. Sydney 2000 was an awesome experience - I met IOC member Irena Szewinska, who was the first woman under 50s for 400m and I was in the commentary box for Cathy Freeman's 400m final. I have been officiating now for over 22 years.



It was when I hit mid 40s and was struggling in open races that I realised there was nothing for masters age athletes except the State Championships run by Athletics NSW. I found my way onto the competition advisory panel at ANSW and later became chairman. With the help of the then ANSW Operations Manager, Janet Naylor, and Competition Manager, Kriszta Kovacs, we were able to get masters age groups included in the Saturday inter-club competition, now called Treloar Shield. As with any change there was opposition so it is pleasing to see masters' events are now well and truly part of the landscape in NSW. After 5 years on the Competition Advisory Panel, I served six years on the board of directors of ANSW.

My first foray into masters athletics was the World Masters Championships in 1997 in Durban where I met GBR athlete Kevin Dillon. We have shared a beer or two every championships since including at World Masters Mountain Running in Switzerland (pictured above). We have both been team managers for our respective countries. My masters career was successful with multiple top 10 finishes and some team medals in cross country and surprisingly the 4x200m indoors. Whilst I did not intend to finish competing this early, after 50 successive and enjoyable seasons my legs have said enough! I am on various committees and officiating as well as enjoying other activities such as cycling, rock climbing and bush walking. At present my focus on the AMA board is documenting the many procedures around AMA competitions and I have a strong view that we need to put in place measures to safeguard our sport from the various challenges it faces.