

## Royce Foley – Athlete and Administrator 8 December 1916 – 13 February 2005

Born 8 dec 1916 Roy began his athletic career at 17 when he joined Glenhuntly Athletic Club in 1934. In his early years Roy was a top rated sprinter but also did many other events for example the discus where he was second in the State titles in 1940.



Following war service Roy returned to athletics again but his focus was now more on throwing (in particular hammer) than sprinting. Roy was Glenhuntly Club Secretary from 46 – 51 and became actively involved with the Glenhuntly Womens club as coach and advisor.

Roy became Club President in 1954 (until 1958) and led the club through during the Melbourne Olympic Games and over the period of its rise back to a top T & F Club. Roy served the Club outstandingly during this time. By the end of the 1950's, Roy's dedication to the sport saw him initiate the Caulfield Coaching Group, a group of dedicated throwers coached by Roy. He remained a coach to Glenhuntly Club athletes but reduced his competitive involvement. When the opportunity to introduce Little Athletics into Victoria arose, Roy was an instigator and leader in setting up and conducting the Caulfield Little Athletics Centre in 1968. His involvement was again extensive and wide reaching both in administering, and coaching.

The formation of Victorian Veteran Athletics Club (VVAC) in the early 1970's saw Roy's competitive ambitions return and he directed his energies into Veteran's athletics, throwing implements such as shot, discus, hammer and javelin with such ability that he was a frequent Gold Medallist at Veterans State, National and World athletic titles for his age group. He also returned to compete at interclub for Glenhuntly, and was a valuable member of many venue premiership teams for Glenhuntly in the throws where he still holds records at all levels. In Veterans athletics his world records were in the Hammer Throw where he held many world records in the various age groups as he passed each five year stage.

With Roy's rekindled enthusiasm in throwing he formed the Throwers Group of the Victorian Veterans Athletic Club (VVAC) in the early 1970's at the Murrumbecna track. Not only did Roy coach and encourage Veteran throwers but he also broadened his coaching to include junior and open athletes as well. Many of these Throwers would later join VVAC.

With the increasing numbers of athletes being involved in throwing Roy saw the need for improved facilities for throwing at Duncan Mackinnon Reserve so that a quality home track and field facility would be available for local throwers and runners. Roy was involved in many negotiations with Caulfield Council (now Glen Eira ) for the establishment of the athletic reserve. When achieved in the mid 1970's he became a prominent and tireless worker on the Duncan Mackinnon Reserve Committee of Management. Further improvements to the

throwing facilities occurred during the 1980's and 1990's. A secure storage area was built for VVAC equipment so that more throwing equipment could be obtained and efficiently maintained.

During the late 1970's Roy envisaged adding the weight throw to the four common Olympic throws to make a pentathlon of throws that would provide a new and exciting event for throwers.

Roy along with others already used the short handle heavy weight as a training device for hammer throwers. Roy involved the engineering skills of fellow throwers to design and manufacture suitable short handle heavy weights for this new pentathlon.

Roy regularly corresponded with throwers in the United States of America and throughout Europe during the process of developing the Weight Pentathlon which was accepted as a trial event by WAVA at 1987 World Veterans Athletic Championships in Melbourne. Roy was a key organiser of the Throwing events at these Championships. He was patriarch of the throwers group, a long term member of the Victorian committee (VVACI) a board member of the Australian body (AAVAC) and a technical delegate of the world body, (WAVA, the World Association of Veteran Athletes). Roy was actively involved in Open athletics being a member of Glenhuntly Athletic Club as well as a member of the AV Technical committee. He achieved 50 years of service with AV in 1991. While all of these positions are voluntary, unpaid positions they contributed to the attributes that served Roy so well that he was able to get Goss's paddock an open parkland area near Olympic Park turned into a giant throwing complex for the Championships. Rings and cages needed to be constructed for the shot, discus, hammer and weight throw. Melbourne city council needed to approve of all this work. The weight pentathlon was conducted at the conclusion of all other throwing events. Not only did the necessary equipment need to be made but to make this event a pentathlon for veterans it was necessary to bring the points tables for heavy weight throw into line with those for the other implements and to use age-graded tables to score the event as a pentathlon in 5 year age groups. Roy managed to get all of this paperwork done and the event went very well. Since then it has enjoyed great popularity amongst throwers of all ages. It is a recognised event at state, national and world level (with many thinking it should be an Olympic event), and it all started with Roy Foley at Murrumbidgee track. So successful has the Throws Pentathlon become that it has become the growth area in Masters athletics.

With the world success of the Weight Pentathlon Roy established the World Weight Pentathlon Throwers Group and organised Postal competitions between countries in Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Roy was presented with a cup (pictured) in Europe for his achievement in establishing the Throws pentathlon. That cup (donated by Roy) is now presented to the best Throws Pentathlete (using the Joe Ball method) at the VMA Throws Pentathlon Championships.

When veteran's athletics was in its infancy in the 1970's Roy recognised the need for accurate record keeping so he took on the role of statistician so he could keep the records of outstanding performances at State, Australian and World level, handling all applications and communicating with the world body (WAVA) for validation of the world record claims. This involved much clerical work and attention to detail. He maintained this voluntary role for many years until his failing eyesight made it impossible.

Over twenty-odd years Roy travelled to World Veterans Championships all over the world every two years, winning many gold medals and breaking many age group records. This had

become increasingly more difficult as his eyesight failed and he became legally blind (but this did not hinder him in recognising whether a hammer thrower was turning on his toes as movement and sound were used). Roy retired from his committee work due to his eyesight but continued to exert his influence in a more relaxed way, among the throwers of Australia. His funeral at St Patrick's Church within one block of his home ground, Duncan McKinnon Park, was well attended by a staunch group of family, friends, veteran throwers and runners, and members of Glenhuntly Athletic Club. The support of these people was a testimony to the network that he has built up over a lifetime of devotion to the things he believed in. Throwers all over the world will always enjoy Roy's legacy to throwing.

To summarise: Roy Foley established himself as a world class athlete over many years as evidenced by his many top performances (and records) in differing age groups but perhaps his greatest achievement was the beginning of accurate record keeping and the development of the Throws Pentathlon with the need for new scoring tables and the development of standards for a new piece of throwing equipment.

Roy represents a worthy athlete for the Hall of Fame in both the category of athlete as well as administrator.