

Penny is still striving

By Nick Creely

Despite all of her momentous achievements in the world of race-walking, champion local athlete Penny Hall still has so many more records to break and gold medals to have draped around her neck.

With 86 medals next to her name across a glittering career, including a whopping 50 gold which has seen her travel all around the globe to compete, including to the USA, Europe and many more destinations around the world, the next challenge is always around the corner.

Penny turned 80 on Sunday in what was a memorable birthday celebration, albeit in much different circumstances, with her incredible life and achievements something her family is tremendously proud of.

Incredibly, Penny still trains seven days a week, and frighteningly, there's absolutely no stopping her when racing, and sport in general finally gets going again. It's almost a guarantee that Penny will pick up exactly where she left off.

"It's given her a bit of an incentive now, she now moves on to a new age group, 80 to 85, and if she stays relatively injury-free she'll be breaking more age-group records," Penny's proud husband Mike said.

Penny's story is quite remarkable and inspirational, and her resilience and passion for everything she does is something to marvel at.

Penny and Mike migrated to Australia in 1966 with three kids at the time, and when she arrived in Australia she joined the Dandenong Hockey Club for five years, and as Mike describes eventually started running "out of the blue".

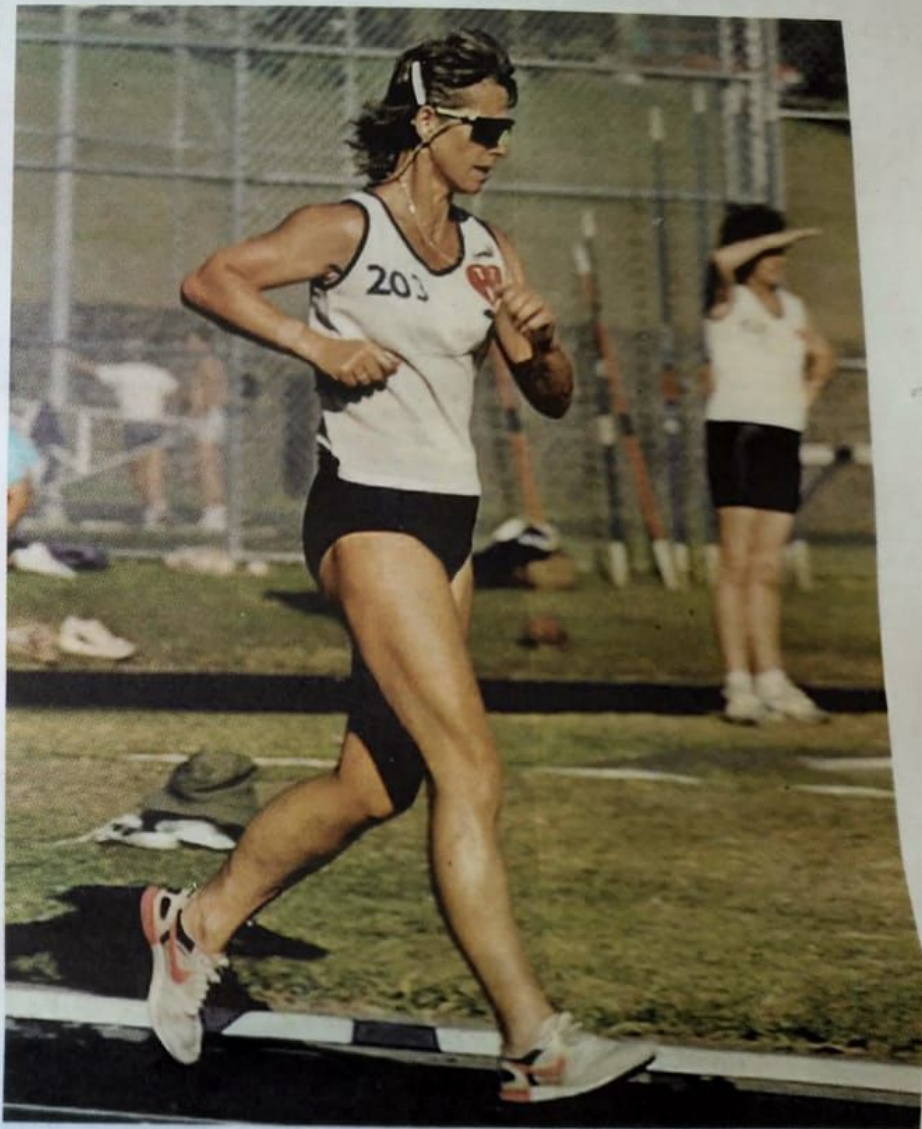
She was a more than a pack a day smoker and for many years suffered from chronic asthma and endured bouts of pneumonia.

But exercise was the answer. She gave up smoking in 1983, and forged a new path - one that would make her eventually go on to achieve so many remarkable feats and take her to so many places around the globe.

In 1985, Penny competed in the Melbourne Marathon, and then eventually she decided to take up race-walking, and did race-walking masters for 25 years, and in that time in world,



Penny on her 80th birthday on Sunday.



Penny has accumulated a vast array of medals and records all over the world. Pictures: SUPPLIED

nationals and state championships she accumulated her array of medals and records.

She also knuckled down and had tremendous results at the World Games in Melbourne in 1987, and became a world champion that very same year.

Proving age, and anything defied her, Penny also became the oldest competitor in the 2004 National Penny Farthing Championships held in Tasmania - a race with the penny farthing, the first machine to be called a bicycle.

One thing is certain, despite everything Penny has achieved, there will be plenty more records and medals just around the corner.