

BC Athletics Masters Committee Report – 2008

a) Summary of Activity

2007 BC Athletics Masters Awards

The following athletes were chosen as the best in their category during 2007. The Masters winners were honoured at the January, 2008 BC Athletics awards banquet:

Masters Female & Male Track and Field Olga Kotelko (W85) and Tom Dickson (M50)

Masters Female & Male Road Running Lucy Smith (W40) and Bruce Deacon (M40)

Masters Female & Male Cross Country Maureen de St. Croix (W50) and Paul Reimer (M50)

Sport BC Award

The Masters Committee selected Norm Lesage (M75) as the Masters nominee for the Sport BC Award. In 2007, Norm ran the 100m in 14.51, 200m in 30.69 and 400m in 1:13.46. Norm was one of the three finalists at the Sport BC awards banquet held on March 5, 2008.

Masters Events

In addition to all of the usual road running, cross country and T&F events that are open to masters in BC, the following Championships were held:

Road Running

5k Penticton March 9 hosted by the Penticton Pounders

8k Shaugnessy 8k hosted by the Lions Gate Road Runners May 25th

Track and Field

Surrey June 20-22 hosted by the Semiahmoo Sun Runners with assistance from the Ocean Athletics Track and Field Club.

Cross Country

Vancouver October 25th hosted by the Hershey Harriers and the Vancouver Thunderbirds

For the first time in many years, an Indoor T&F meet was held in BC. Twelve masters competed in the Kamloops indoor meet February 15-17. In 2009, this meet will be held on February 21-22.

b) Improvements, Challenges

Masters Age

The question of, "At what age should Masters Athletics start at?" was discussed at a BC Athletics Masters Committee meeting. The committee tried to think of all the advantages and disadvantages of keeping the age at 35+ versus raising the starting age to 40+. The biggest advantage of the lower age was that it would allow more athletes to compete in Masters competitions. However athletes at age 35 are often still world class and several are still setting Open world records. It seems that the real decline in athletic performance begins closer to age 40 than 35, and therefore it would make more sense to set the Masters age at 40+. Athletes 35+ and even 30+ could still compete in Masters meets but in the Sub-Masters category.

Consequently, the BC Athletics Masters Committee recommended to the Board of Directors of BC Athletics to submit a request to the Athletics Canada AGM that the Masters age be changed to 40+ for Track and Field, Road Running, Cross Country and Race Walking.

Athletics Canada, for various reasons, decided not to pursue a change to the Masters age at this time.

Background

Some months after the second World Masters T&F Championships held in Gothenburg Sweden in 1977, the IAAF gave the right to the World Association of Veteran Athletics (WAVA) to decide who would take part in the Masters World Championships provided that the events were restricted to men 40 years and over and women 35 years and over. Every few years, attempts were made at the WAVA General Assembly to align the men and women's ages, usually by raising the women's age to 40. All of those attempts failed. Finally,

in 2003 at the General Assembly in Puerto Rico, by a vote of 59-2, it was agreed to reduce the starting age for men to 35, thus removing the long standing disparity between men and women. The IAAF modified its rules upon the recommendation from WAVA.

The BC Athletics Masters Committee did approach the Canadian Masters Athletic Association through the BC Director, Harold Morioka, to consider a motion to be submitted to the WMA (World Masters Athletics, formerly WAVA) General Assembly to change the masters men's age back to 40 and to raise the women's age to 40. CMAA decided not to bring forward such a motion at this time.

There seems to be some confusion about the Masters age within the BC Athletics membership. Athletes who wish to compete at the Senior level within BC, Canada or Internationally, can take out a Senior membership in BC Athletics and enjoy all of the privileges of that membership past the age of 35 or 40. Many athletes do that and compete effectively at the top level. This year the Senior Men's Cross Country championship was won by a 37 year old (Jon Brown) and the Senior Women's Cross Country championship was won by a 40 year old (Marilyn Arsenault). The men's masters race was won by a 45 year old, with a 35 year old finishing second. Hopefully, everyone enjoyed the competition that they decided to enter.

c) Planned Activities

Work with the appropriate people and organizations to ensure that the various BC Athletic Masters Championships are scheduled for 2009.

Maintain the BC Athletics Masters records for T&F and Road Running.

Participate in the efforts that are underway to form a closer relationship with the Canadian Masters Athletic Association.

d) Key Indicators

Records

In 2008, BC athletes set 51 new BC T&F records, 22 new Canadian records and 3 new World records. In road running, BC athletes set 8 new records (we also added some new bests in the 35-39 category where the performance was better than the existing 40-44 record). Much thanks goes to Harold Morioka who spent many hours (probably many days) compiling the track and field records.

Membership

As of November 25, there were 1,663 age 35+ people registered with BC Athletics.

Athletic: Competitive (291), Adult Rec Runners (183), Training (626), Senior (16)

Non-athletic: Coaches (216), Officials (100) and Associates(230)

e) Major Initiatives

Support the Road Running Committee in its efforts to promote and improve the BC Athletics Road Running Championships.

Review the criteria used for selecting our Master of the Year athletes.

f) Urgent Matters

Need some new members to join the Masters Committee. We welcome new members who would like to make a contribution to Masters Athletics in BC.

g) Other

I would like to thank the members of the masters committee (Frank Stebner(vice chair), Gerry Dragomir(Secretary), George Gluppe, Tom Hastie, Bill Hooker, Val Jenkinson and Olga Kotelko, for all of their work this year. Thanks also to Frank Stebner, who decided to step down from the Committee after many years of valued contributions.

Submitted by Jake Madderom – Chair, Masters Committee