



THE FINISH LINE



Athletics Manitoba - Masters Athletics

VOL: 1 Issue: 2

Wednesday, November 2, 2022



Photo by Brook Jones

Masters runner Breta Passler competes on the track in the women's 4x400 metre relay at the 2022 Canadian Masters Championships in Regina.

Hello fellow Masters athletes.

The 2022 Outdoor season is over, and what an outstanding year it was for Masters Athletics in the province.

The road racing and the cross-country seasons are winding down.

It was great to see so many masters athletes competing in various events in both the Indoor and outdoor seasons. We had enough participation that we were even able to hold a few masters only races, including the first ever provincial Masters Mile. We have to thank the Athletics Manitoba staff and the clubs for organizing and for supporting our participation in these events.

Our masters committee continues to make great progress and in conjunction with AM and MRA office staff, we have completed several key activities. We have created a specific area on the Athletics Manitoba Website with information geared to masters athletes.

In this space, you will find links and resources, frequently asked questions as well as our newly created Provincial Indoor and Outdoor Masters age group records.

We are continuing to work on our communication strategy and hopefully getting the word out to encourage

people to join our growing Masters Athletics community.

There are events throughout the year that masters athletes can participate in and we hope to see you out. We encourage you to bring out your friends, parents, current, former, or new "older" athletes to participate in masters athletics.

If you are new to the sport or getting back into the sport, there are several opportunities for masters athletes to compete. Please check the Athletics Manitoba and Manitoba Runners' Association websites for the calendar of events. Also check the Canadian Masters Athletics website which includes national and international events.

Whatever event you choose, the key is in staying active and participating to the best of your ability.

We hope you enjoy our second edition of the Finish Line. If you have ideas for newsletter articles or would like to join our committee, please reach out to the Athletics Manitoba programs director.

See you on the track or on the roads at the finish line.

Greg Athayde,
Masters committee chair with Athletics Manitoba and provincial board representative with Canadian Masters Athletics

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Life long love of running for Flett

By Grant Mitchell

One of the prominent age class runners on the roads and on the track in this Province in the last five years has been Gord Flett.

Gord started like most of us, trying cross-country and track in junior high, in his case at Beliveau School. He managed to come fourth in the suburban championships before getting a night job at the Free Press that left him no time for organized sports, between school and job. He continued his career in the newspaper business, that took him to Pacific Press in Vancouver in 1982 and he spent the next 33 years in British Columbia.

He was a smoker for 27 years until he started getting bad sinus headaches and realized that a change in lifestyle was indicated. He went on the patch and defeated tobacco. He started walking and working out and then he saw an ad for the BC provincial cross-country championships that had an all-comers event at a four kilometre distance. He went to Jericho Park and competed, finishing 3rd last. Still, he was hooked on running again.

Gord was a successful mountain runner and won his age class (50-59) at the Canadian Championships at Cypress Mountain in 2015. He was also champion in his age class in the 5 peak series. Gord was a regular in the 10KM event at the Okanagan Marathon in Kelowna.

His most satisfying accomplishment as a road runner was his PB 40:49 in that race one year. His most memorable race was the Sand Castle 10 km in White Rock, B.C. on a hilly course. After the race, organized by Mary and Jim Hines originally from Winnipeg, Mary introduced him to Solomon Rotich, an elite runner from Kenya.

Gord was all scraped up from a race the previous day in Squamish, where the dry conditions had meant that the ground kept breaking up under the runners. Rotich noticed the scrapes on Gord's skin and asked how he got them.

Gord explained about his race the previous day. "You raced yesterday and again today?" Rotich asked. "I love to run," Gord replied. Mary corrected him: "Gord loves to race." And it's true.

While in BC, Gord earned his



Photo by Brook Jones

Masters runner Gord Flett competes in the 2,000 metre steeplechase race at the 2022 Manitoba Provincial Age Class Championships at University Stadium in Winnipeg June 17.

coaching credentials after being trained by Olympic medallist, Lynn Kanuka. He also got certified as a track and field official.

His job at Pacific Press ended and he had a chance to buy his Mom's house in Winnipeg in 2015. He moved back and got a job at the Free Press as a substitute for workers on vacation or sick leave, working part-time. He tried the Fire Paramedic half marathon that autumn and won his age class. He ran races from 600m to 3000m on the indoor track at the Max Bell meets that winter and then did the entire MRA series the following season. He even ran the occasional 400m, including in relays. At age 60, he was able to take an unreduced pension and retired from work. He beat Leon Clegg once in the 1500 m, when Leon had just competed in the 100m.

Gord's best 5KM was the one time he broke 20 minutes, a 19:56 in Coquitlam in 2013. His best 10 km was

that 40:49 in 2012. He did an 8KM in 32:34 in the Vancouver marathon in 2011. He did 68:12 for the 15-km in Merville, B.C.

His best 10 mile was in the Islendiggadagurin race in 2011 in 72:18. His best half marathon was a 1:34:21 in the April Fool's Run in Gibson's Landing, B.C. in 2015. He has not run a full marathon, although he did a hilly 36km race in Kamloops once.

Gord's worst experience on the roads was a 30KM in Langley, BC. The flat course encouraged him to go a little faster than the distance allowed and by 20KM, he "bonked".

He was mostly walking the rest of the way, but he had a cheering section at the end and so when he emerged from the woods with 400m to go, he managed to run it in. It was a race he'd rather forget.

The prodigal son has been a major presence on the local running scene in the last five years.

Sprinting into the records book

By Greg Athayde

The provincial masters record book may not have an official author but it's not far off to say Omena Babalola wrote the book.

From her early career, Omena has always been and continues to be a high performing athlete.

She earned many titles in her youth, including Canadian University Bronze medalist in the 60m in 1991. She was the Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada Champion in the 60, 100, 200, and 300 metre events between 1990 and 1993, and Manitoba Champion in the 100m and 200m events in 1995 and 1996.

Her most memorable moment in track was winning the bronze medal in the 200m at the Canadian

Championships in 1992. She was not ranked in the top 25 going into the event but came out with a bronze medal! From this, Omena learned to always give it your best through the rounds (and in life) as you never know what you have in you.

While a lot of athletes retire from sport and move on to other things, Omena continues to pursue her athletics career and is one of the top female athletes competing in sprint events at the Masters level.

Omena pretty much owns the Provincial Masters record book for short sprints.

Omena's highlights as a Masters athlete include:

- Manitoba Masters Female Athlete of the year (2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, and 2019).
- Outdoor Age Class Provincial Champion in the 100m and 200m for the last 10 years.
- Top five Canadian in her age group for the past 10 years.
- Top 20 in her age group in the North American/Caribbean region in 2019.
- Top 100 in her age group in the World rankings in 2019.
- 2019 Canadian Masters Athletics (CMA) Championships - Silver in 100m and 200m.
- 2019 Central America and Caribbean Masters Athletics Championships (NCCWMA) - Silver in 4x100m relay, sixth in the 200m, seventh in the 100m.
- 2016 America's Masters Games - bronze 100m, fourth in the 200m
- 2011 World Masters Outdoors Championships - Finalist in 100m, semi finalist in 200m.
- 2010 World Masters Indoors



Photo by Brook Jones

Masters runner Omena Babalola competes in the women's 200 metres at the 2022 Canadian Masters Championships in Regina July 31.

Championships - fourth in the 60m race (narrowly missing the bronze medal by 0.01 seconds), semi finalist in the 200m.

Omena has coached and mentored girls of all ages in athletics events for over 35 years at elementary, high school, university, and club levels. Her coaching philosophy has always been to encourage young girls to be the best they can, both on and off the track.

Omena is the mother of adult twins. Her daughter is also a track athlete who has represented the U of M and the province. Her most recent "track" moment was being in the same heat as her daughter in the 100m at the 2022 Manitoba Provincial Championships. Omena believes that she is blessed to still be running and that age is not a debilitating factor!

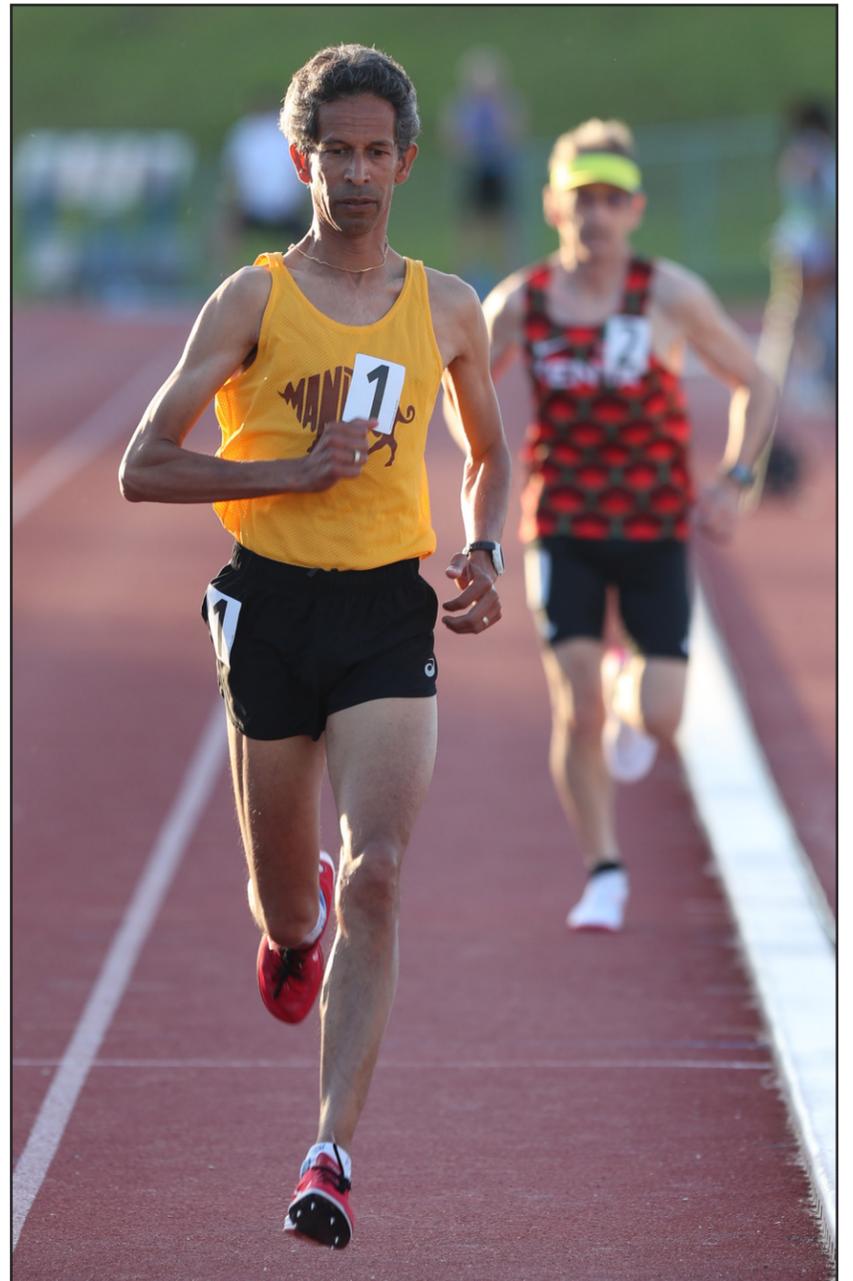
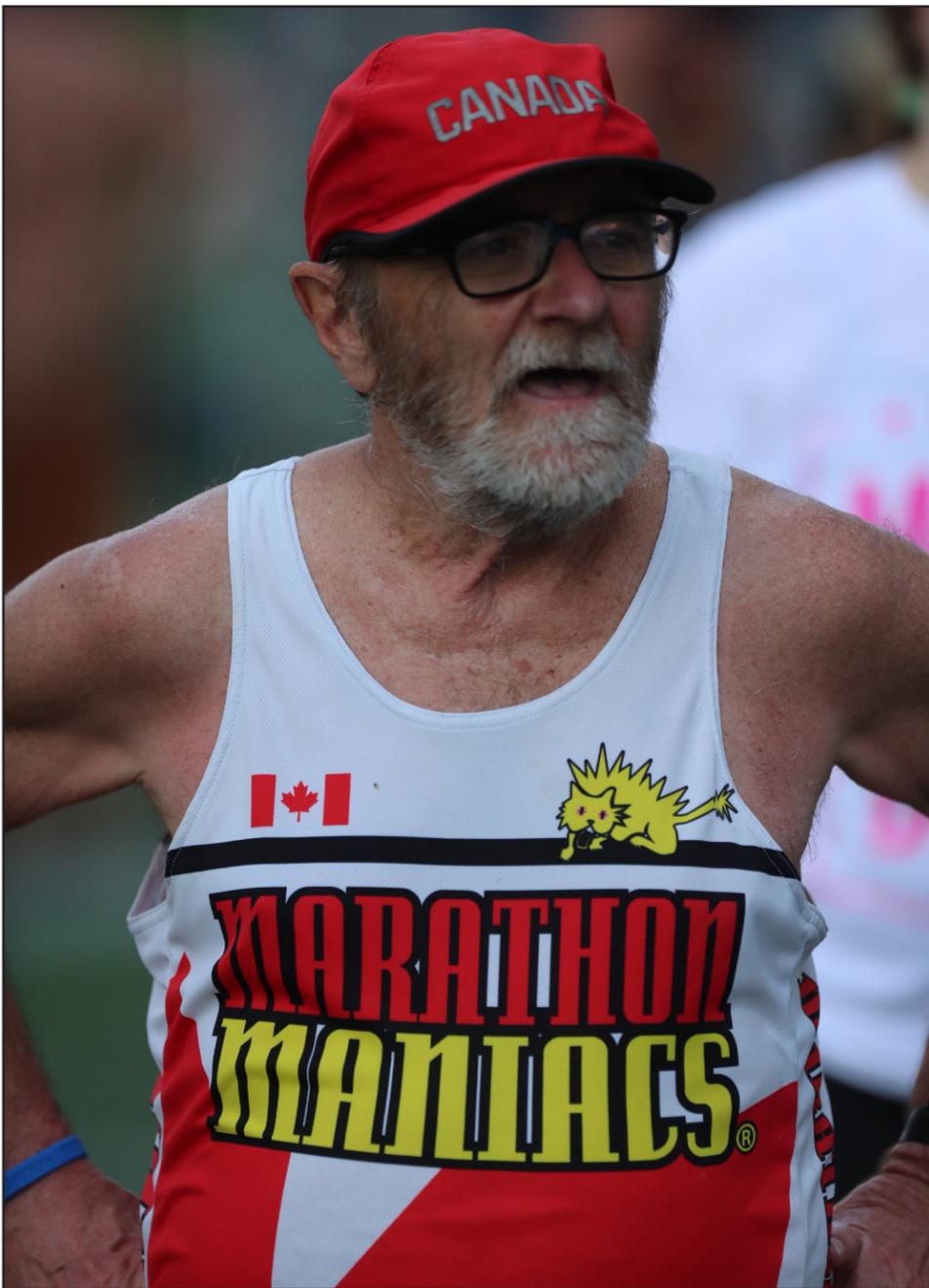
Omena is vice-president (2018 to

present) and director (2012 to present) on the board of Athletics Manitoba. As a member of the Athletics Manitoba - masters committee, Omena is an ambassador who is passionate about developing and growing the sport for Masters athletes. Her participation at the World Masters Athletics Championship presents an opportunity to promote athletics in Manitoba.

Omena hopes to serve as a role model for young girls, and women in general, and to encourage more women to participate in athletics as a lifelong program for the tremendous benefits to their physical, mental, and emotional well being.

To see this outstanding Masters athlete perform, you can catch Omena in action at various meets in the Indoor and Outdoor Athletics seasons.

Masters athletes in action on home soil



Photos by Brook Jones

Clockwise from top: L-R: Masters athletes Gary Sutherland, Ken Friesen, Gord Flett and Greg Athayde celebrate as a relay team at the 2022 Manitoba Age Class Provincial Track & Field Championships at University Stadium in Winnipeg June 18. Athayde (No. 1) and Dennis Lang (No. 2) competing in the 1,500 metres at the championships June 17. Jeff Vince at the 2022 Manitoba Marathon.

Competing at masters competitions

By Greg Athayde

Masters Competitions: Have you considered competing at a masters championship event? Provincial, Canadian, or even Worlds.

This past spring, in addition to competing at the Manitoba Provincial Indoors Championships, Gordon Flett and I went to the Canadian Masters Athletics Championships in St. John, NB.

We came back with several medals in our age category including one meet record. This was my first time participating at a Masters Championships at this level, and it was a lot of fun. If you have never competed at one of these before, you should.

Races are typically run according to seed times, so you get to compete against athletes of similar ability. The results are then sorted, and awards are presented in five-year age categories.

The friendly competition and camaraderie both on and off the track made for a very enjoyable event and winning a few medals did not hurt either. It did, however, raise some questions going through airport security. If you are new to the sport or getting back into the sport, there are several opportunities for masters athletes to compete.

Our Provincial Championships were held June 17 to 18, at the Uni-



Photo by Milt Jones

Masters age group athletes gather together after competing in the 4x100 metre relay at the 2002 Canada Games / Legion Nation Trials at University Stadium in Winnipeg July 9.

versity of Manitoba. The Canadian Masters Outdoors Championships were held in Regina from July 29 to 31.

A group of Manitoba athletes made their impact on the event as they left with two meet records, several personal best and even a couple provincial records. We would love to have a strong Team Manitoba presence at this event.

The World Masters Outdoor Championships were held in Fin-

land, and we had one Manitoban attend. So, look out for future World Masters Championship events, which I hear are just as much fun, but can also be quite competitive.

If the track is not for you, then you may want to consider road race championships.

Visit the Canadian Masters Athletics website for details.

Whatever event you choose, the key is in staying active and participating to the best of your ability.

The 5-Minute Dynamic Warm-Up: A Must-Do for Runners

By Carolyn Coffin

Are you the type of runner who gets dressed and heads straight out the door? If so, you may be putting yourself at increased risk for injury.

Newer science supports the idea of performing a dynamic warm-up, which simply refers to a series of movements prior to every run where the joints are taken through their full range of motion.

In addition to preventing injuries and muscle soreness, the goal of a dynamic warm-up is to elevate the heart rate and core body temperature, promote blood flow, activate the joints and muscles. In addition, the dynamic warm-up primes the

entire body for the structural and metabolic demands of running.

Ideally a dynamic warm-up is tailored to the type of run you have planned. Therefore, looks a little bit different before an easy jog compared to a more intense track session.

Prior to an easy jog, some dynamic warm-up ideas include:

- Walking lunges +/- twist
- Lunges to the side and back
- Leg swings - forward/back, side-to-side
- Hip swivels

Prior to a more intense running workout, you might also add:

- Walking on tippy toes
- High knee hurdle walk (youtu.be/zFo_tYi_Xco)

- Hamstring sweeps (youtu.be/cg-fpPeF05tl)
- Skipping - forward, backwards, sideways +/- arm action
- Carioca (youtu.be/E6SKcfQBZlc)
- A skips
- B skips
- Two to four x 50metre accelerations or strides

By no means is this an exhaustive list. Do your own research to determine the dynamic warm-up routine that works best for you.

As little as three to five minutes before each easy run and five to 10 minutes before more intense sessions can go a long way to keeping you limber and performing at your best.

Masters Athletes at Canadian Masters Indoor Championships



Photo submitted by Greg Athayde

Masters runners Greg Athayde and Gord Flett at the 2022 Canadian Masters Athletics (Indoor) Championships in St. John, NB.

CALENDAR Masters Athletics

Track & Field Meets and Dates - Designate masters events

- Dec. 3 - George Tanner Memorial / Jim Daly Fieldhouse, University of Manitoba
- Dec. 9 and 10 - AM Last Chance / Jim Daly Fieldhouse, University of Manitoba
- Jan. 11 - Bison Grand Prix No. 1 / Jim Daly Fieldhouse, University of Manitoba
- Jan. 20 and 21 - WOA Winter Open / Jim Daly Fieldhouse, University of Manitoba
- Feb. 3 and 4 - Jim Daly Bison Classic / Jim Daly Fieldhouse, University of Manitoba
- Feb. 15 - Bison Grand Prix No. 2 / Jim Daly Fieldhouse, University of Manitoba
- Feb. 25 and 26 - Canadian Masters Indoor Championships / Toronto, Ontario
- Mar. 3 and 4 - Boeing Indoor Classic / Jim Daly Fieldhouse, University of Manitoba.

For more information on Masters Athletics visit athleticsmanitoba.com

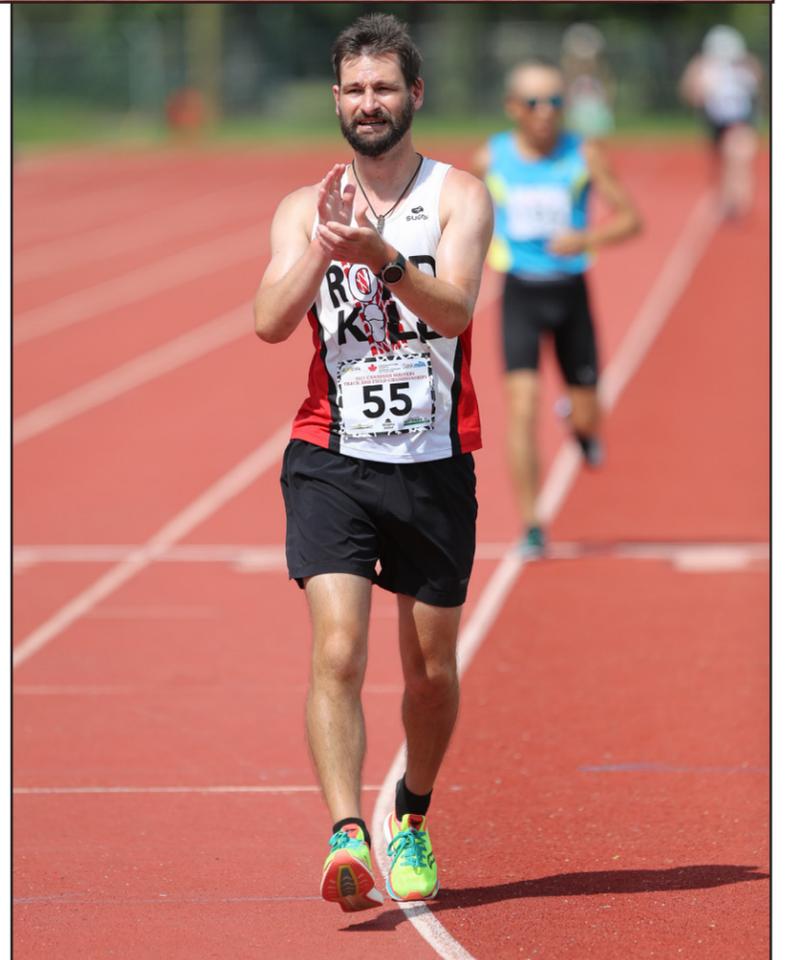
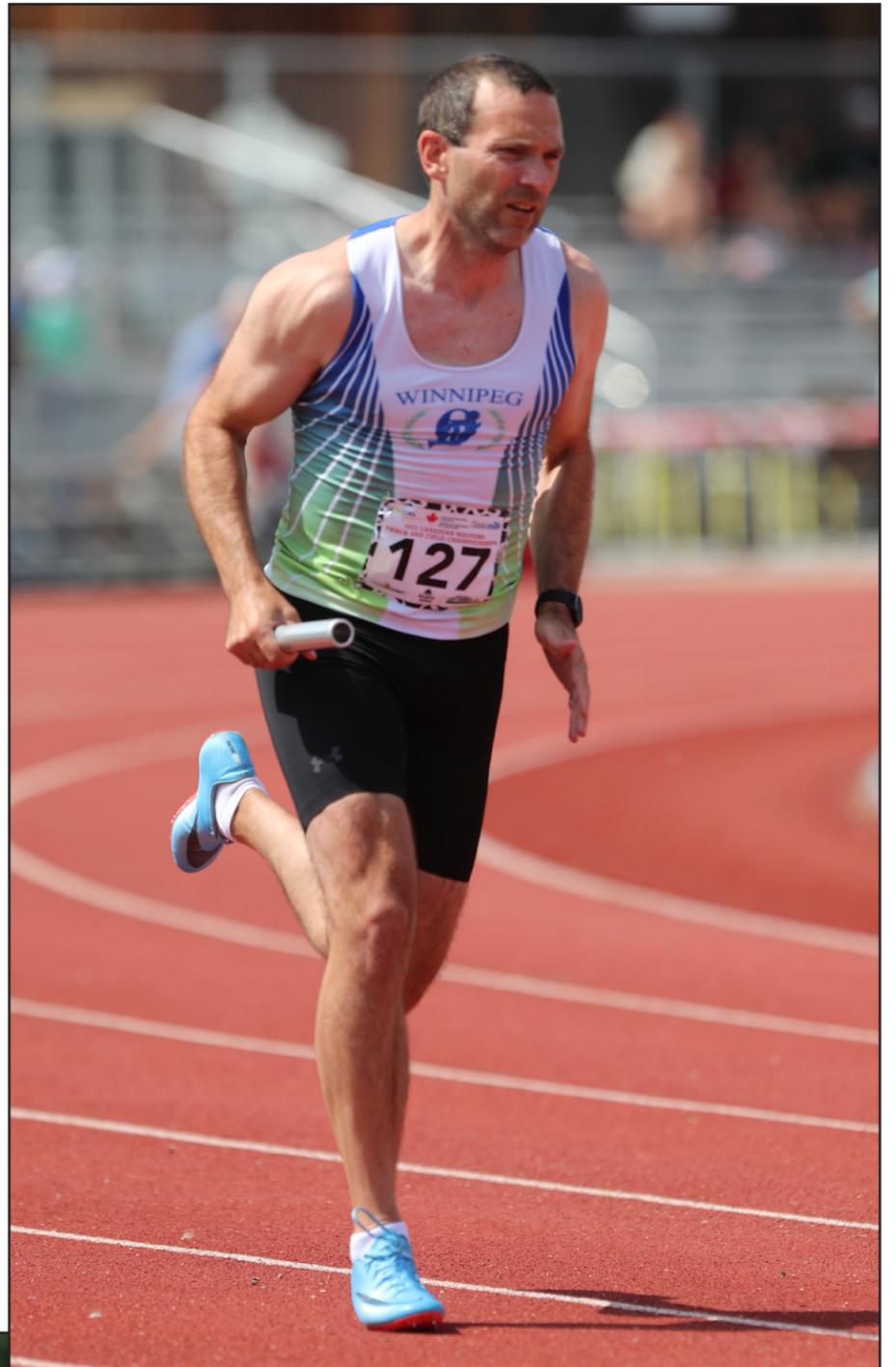
Masters athletes in action at Canadian Masters Championships



Photos by Brook Jones

Clockwise from top Left: Masters runner George Stewart is all smiles at the Canadian Masters Championships in Regina. Darcey Harder competing in the men's 5,000 metres at the championships. Andrew Ferguson, Darcey Harder, Ken Friesen give thumbs up at the championships. Breta Passler competes in the women's 200 metres at the championships.

Masters athletes in action at Canadian Masters Championships



Photos by Brook Jones

Masters runners from Manitoba competing at the 2022 Canadian Masters Championships in Regina. Clockwise from top left: Greg Athayde competing in the men's 800 metre race. Mike Morris competing in the 4x400 metre relay. Andrew Ferguson applauds after crossing the finish line in the men's 800 metres. Ken Friesen (No. 64) and Greg Athayde (No. 7) competing in the men's 800 metres.

Friesen competes at World Masters Athletes

By Ken Friesen,

This summer I joined 75 athletes from Canada to travel to Tampere, Finland to compete in the World Masters Athletic Championships, which is open to anyone 35 plus years of age.

The eight hour time difference challenged me more than I had expected for the first few days but it got better as the days passed. It was also unseasonably hot with daily highs in the mid 30's.

The events were spread over the two weeks of June 26 to July 9 and three stadiums were needed to accommodate all the events with their five year age group categories and participants from all over the world.

These outdoor championships are held every two years, the indoor version is held on alternating years and the hosting location changes each year. They have opening and closing ceremonies, drug testing and age class world record holders which were out in full force including in all of my finals.

Another new experience for me was a 'call room' where you had to check in a 1/2 hour before the race and put on your nations singlet, spikes and other gear before being led down to the side of the track by officials while the race before yours was in progress.

When that race was done the officials led

you onto the track to your lane assignment. Once the gun went off there was a lot of jostling for position, elbows flying and people running inches away from you for most of the race. Perfect conditions for achieving PBs.

In the first week, I raced in the 800m heats and qualified for the next days 12 man final. With a quick start in the final I was able to get an inside lane position in the lead pack and pushed to a 5th place finish.

The following day I raced a 5,000m on the track and won my heat but there was a faster heat and I ended up with 11th when all the times were combined.

During second week, I raced in the 1,500m heats and advanced to the 16 man finals where the last two laps seemed like a sprint and I finished seventh. The next day I raced the 10km on a hot, hilly course for a hard fought fifth place. While on the track it was all business but after each race the camaraderie and fellowship was amazing. People taking group pictures of the participants were common after a race.

Canadian team members had a good showing winning some medals, PB's and lots of cheering each other on.

I felt very fortunate for having the opportunity to participate as it was a 'bucket list' type of experience with very high pre-race excitement and post race satisfaction.



Photo submitted by Ken Friesen
Masters runner Ken Friesen competing at the World Masters Athletics Championships in Tampere, Finland.

Masters athletes in action at Chris McCubbins Provincial Age Class Cross Country Championships



Photos by Brook Jones

Masters runners competing at the 2022 Chris McCubbins Provincial Age Class Cross Country Championships at Kilcona Park in Winnipeg Oct. 22.

Remembering the life of runner Chris McCubbins

By Dennis Lang

Chris McCubbins was an exceptional elite runner but he was an even more exceptional person. His performances as a runner are in a class of their own in Manitoba's running history and you could not overstate his contributions to our running community. A fierce competitor on the track and roads, he was a modest, soft spoken and generous person who was a natural leader by his example.

Deceased since 2009, Chris was a native of Enid, Oklahoma and graduated from Oklahoma State University, where he was an All-American athlete in track and cross country. His specialty event was the 3,000 metre steeplechase. In 1967 he won the gold medal in that event at the Winnipeg hosted 5th Pan American Games, where he also met his future wife, a Winnipeg native. After a two year period of military service, during which he competed internationally for the U.S. Army's elite Modern Pentathlon Team, he and now wife Marie returned to Winnipeg in the fall of 1970 for Chris to attend graduate school at the University of Manitoba. Fortuitously for Winnipeg Chris would spend the rest of his life here and have a profound effect on its running scene and his life work in early childhood education and less-privileged youth advocacy.

As a child Chris was small for his age and not at all athletically inclined. He tentatively began running on his own at age 15 after other sports had not worked out for him. His two year older brother Tip, a runner and natural athlete, had to encouraged him to join the high school cross country team. His innate running ability was instantly apparent to others and he had finally found a sport he was good at and enjoyed. He improved consistently through his final year of high school but was not fast enough yet to be offered a full athletic scholarship to Oklahoma State University, where he enrolled in Arts and ran cross country and track as a freshman in 1963 - 1964. By the end of his first season his dedication to twice daily training paid off and Chris' performances ranked him the team's number one cross country runner and by his second year at OSU he earned a full scholarship. An outstanding college athletics career followed

and culminated with his winning the 3,000m steeplechase at the 1967 NCAA Track and Field Championships, setting a new national collegiate record.

After his best year of running In 1967, Chris set his sights on making the 1968 US Olympic team, for the Mexico City Games. Chris was leading the Olympic trials 3,000m steeple race when he crashed into a hurdle causing a fracture in a leg bone and an eighth place finish, sadly ending his quest for an Olympic team berth. Induction into the US Army in December 1968 and marriage in May 1969 ensued. Luckily, he was able to avoid going to the Vietnam conflict by qualifying for the US Army's Modern Pentathlon Team competing in the five sport event of cross country running, swimming, equestrian, fencing and pistol shooting. Discharged from the army in September 1970, Chris and Marie returned to Winnipeg and Chris began a masters degree program in Psychology.

Thankfully Chris was by no means finished with competitive running and Winnipeg was the beneficiary.

His passion for running was as strong as ever and he was welcomed by coach Jim Daly onto the U of M Bisons cross country team. Chris was soon leading workouts and acting as a role model and mentor for team members. Still intent on making a US Olympic team he trained hard for the 1972 trials 3,000m steeplechase but a serious Achillies tendon injury, that would require surgery, dashed his hopes once again. However, there was a silver lining to his Olympic disappointment when he serendipitously discovered his destiny to be a school teacher during a recreation director's position at a summer program for children. He found he really enjoyed the interaction with young people and saw a new career path for himself from the experience. In the spring 1974 he graduated from the Faculty of Education with an Early Childhood Teaching Certificate and that fall began his calling as a teacher at Kent Road School.

His Olympic Games dream remained alive however and he now set himself a new running goal - to compete for Canada at the 1976 Montreal Games. 1974 and 1975 were dedicated training years toward this goal.

On July 25, 1975 Chris ran



Photo submitted by Greg Athayde

The late Chris McCubbins competes for Yellow Snow at a road running event at Assiniboine Park.

28:16.51 in a 10,000m track race, at an international meet in Montreal, achieving the required Olympic standard for the event and setting a Manitoba native record that still stands today, over 45 years later.

In January 1976 Chris and a group of running friends from the University of Manitoba formed the offbeat named Yellow Snow Athletic Club and registered it with the Canadian Track and Field Association so Chris could get funding for his Olympic training.

The Yellow Snow Club was inducted into the MRA Road Running Hall of Fame in 2015.

One more detail was left to accomplish, Chris received his Canadian citizenship in March of the year. A leave of absence from his teaching job let Chris head south for better training conditions and by running up to twenty miles a day he got himself into the best shape of his running life.

His superior fitness was demonstrated by his running a personal best of 13:44 at the 5000m distance in May. He was more than ready and on May 29th at the Canadian Olympic Trials in Montreal he finished first in the 10,000m race and made the Olympic Team in that event.

But once again, the fickle finger of fate was not finished with Chris. The very day after his 10,000m trials victory an awkward misstep walking off a curb led to a painful, debilitating groin injury. With his dream of competing at the July Olympic Games now in jeopardy Chris decided not to stop his final intensive preparation to let the injury heal.

The condition stubbornly persisted and he was forced to reduced his training to light jogging.

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He did hours of daily physiotherapy at the Olympic training camp and try multiple cortisone shots in the groin, but it all failed to quell the intense pain while running. Knowing he was not ready to race Chris lined up on the start line July 23 for the first of three heats in the men's 10,000m event where the top four finishers from each heat would qualify for the final on July 26. He courageously ran with the leaders for 2,400 meters before the pain was too great to continue but he persevered to the finish in 12th place displaying his class and sportsmanship by running the rest of the race in an outer lane so as not to impede the faster runners lapping him who were still competing for a place in the final.

Devastated by not meeting his goal of doing well in the Olympic Games he took most of 1977 to recover psychologically from a deep sense of personnel failure. But life goes on and a champion like Chris does not stay down for long. In November 1977 he won the Canadian Cross Country Championship and got selected for the Canadian team that would compete at the World Cross Country Championship in Scotland in March. In 1978 he also reduced his teaching job to half days to pursue a Bachelor of Education degree as well as coaching the University of Manitoba cross country team.

1979 was the year the North American running boom came to Winnipeg with three new races: The Winnipeg Tribune 10KM Run for Fun, the Manitoba Marathon for the people living with intellectual disabilities and the Bonne Bell 10-km for Women. Each event hosted large fields of citizen runners in the thousands as well as the local elites as road running had become a mass participation sport. This boom lasted into the 1990s and represented the golden age of Manitoba road running and Chris was in the thick of it with a renewed passion for competitive racing. In 1981 he would run 29:46 in the Athletes Wear 10-km Run for Fun and 48:55 in the Gimli Icelandic Festival 10 mile, times that are not even approached in today's MRA road races. Chris continued to stay race fit and ran fast times into his late 30s with his sites now set on his 40th birthday and a second coming as an elite masters runner.

Chris turned 40 in November 1985 and for the next two years was one

of the best masters runners in the world. In the spring of 1986, he won the Athletes Wear 10KM in 30:39 after running a track 10,000m earlier in the week in 30:27. In June he entered the Cascade Run-Off 15KM in Portland, Oregon finishing 25th overall in 46:07 and first master in a world class field. In August he ran the Asbury Park 10KM Classic in New Jersey in 30:49 winning \$1,000 for first master. Chris' performances in 1986 got him ranked the top master runner in Canada and number four in the world by Runner's World magazine. At the 1987 Cascade Run-Off he was again top master setting a new North American masters 15KM road record of 45:35. He would be first master at both the Asbury Park 10KM and the Falmouth Road Race in Cape Cod. 1987 saw Chris voted Manitoba Runner of the Year and ranked sixth master in the world by Runner's World magazine. During this period, he set numerous Canadian Masters national records on the track and road.

There was another significant side to Chris' running career, Chris the coach. Despite his unassuming nature he easily drew like minded runners to him because of his generosity and success as a competitive runner. Chris was first and foremost a student of running and made a point of staying current with new coaching practices, constantly researching and expanding his knowledge base. Many of Manitoba's top elite runners of the 1980s came from of his Yellow Snow Club. Chris' workout philosophy was simple "let's go out and have some fun". Chris instilled confidence in his runners by believing in themselves and to treat setbacks as lessons and not obstacles. There was always another opportunity coming and Chris lived what he taught. You succeed in running with hard work, perseverance and positive thinking just as you do in life. Chris continued coaching local elite runners up to his diagnosis of leukemia in 2009 well after he himself retired as a competitive runner. He lived and loved running to the very end. There is one more extraordinary accomplishment in Chris' life that goes to the very core of his being - Chris the school teacher. Whatever Chris did he did well and that included his life work as an early childhood educator in Winnipeg schools. He took seriously and dedicated himself to being an exemplary male role model for his young, impressionable pupils who

may not have one in their lives outside school.

Chris had great empathy for others and demonstrated it through the care and nurturing he gave his students particularly those who came from impoverished backgrounds. Assisting others who were disadvantaged became a passion in his life. Teaching at an inner city school he saw the difficulties and inequalities his students faced compared to those in more affluent parts of the city. By now Chris had become an accomplished cross country skier even entering and doing well in competitions. He saw this and as opportunity to get his students involved in an outdoor activity that they normally would not get to try due to the cost of equipment their families could not bare. He took it upon himself to assemble the necessary ski equipment from garage sales, friends and corporate donations. Then he arranged to transport his students to the Windsor Park Nordic Centre and taught them how to ski. His program eventually expanded to include other schools. The Cross Country Ski Association of Manitoba got involved with support and fundraising and from all these efforts over a period of years The Great Get Off Your Butt and Ski Program was born for kids of all economic backgrounds to learn to ski, a testament to Chris' devotion to benefit those less-privileged.

For his unparalleled achievements as a Manitoba runner Chris was inducted into the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame in 1999 and in 2008 he was similarly inducted into the Manitoba Runner's Association Road Running Hall of Fame. Chris' attitude to winning medals and receiving awards was always "receiving these things was great but the journey getting there was better".

In 2009 Chris was diagnosed with Leukemia. It would be his final contest of willpower and determination. In typical Chris fashion he courageously fought the cancer for six months giving the battle everything he had and never giving up hope.

On August 6, 2009 he sadly lost his fight, but memories of him live on in the minds of the countless individuals he befriended, influenced or enabled with his modest, generous and caring personality.

In 2013 Joe Mackintosh published a book titled *Chris McCubbins - Running the Distance*.

Much of the material in this profile is taken from his inspirational and heartwarming biography of Chris.

MRA celebrating 50 years

By Kathy Wiens,
MRA Executive Director

Never before have I seen so much history involving road running in Manitoba as there was on April 25th at the Manitoba Runners' Association's annual Hall of Fame banquet.

Numerous generations were represented, from members of the Bison Track Team to some of the first members of the Manitoba Runners' Association.

In 2006, the Manitoba Runners' Association celebrated its 35th Anniversary by establishing the MRA Road Running Hall of Fame. Each year, inductees are celebrated at the MRA Annual Hall of Fame banquet. There are two MRA Hall of Fame plaques that celebrate these athletes, volunteers and running clubs who have raised the profile of road running in Manitoba.

The plaques have finally found their new home in the James Daly Fieldhouse at the Max Bell Centre, University of Manitoba.

The MRA turned 50 years old in 2021 and it was special to finally be able to celebrate such an auspicious milestone.

The Banquet truly was a celebration of those 50 years, with inductees Alphonse Bernard (Builder), Allan Finkel (Builder), Claude Berube (Athlete/Builder), Roger Schwegel (Athlete), Terry Cooke (Builder and Jack Dubnicoff (Athlete) in attendance, along with their family, friends and supporters.

Our Keynote Speaker, Grant Mitchell, did not fail to entertain, and our Emcee, Marcy Markusa of CBC Radio, kept the evening moving. The crowd of 275 attendees more than filled the room at Celebrations Dinner Theatre in Fort Garry, being the largest gathering of its kind in Manitoba's long history of road running.

There were also the 2019 awards to be given out: MRA Race Director of the Year to Dwayne Olson of the Hec-la Half Marathon, Female MRA Road Runner of the Year to Melanie Morris and Male MRA Road Runner of the Year to Bob Cox.

Two President's Awards, which recognize outstanding contributions to the sport of road running in Manitoba,



Photo by Brook Jones

Road runner Bob Cox speaks at the 50th anniversary celebration of the Manitoba Runners' Association.

were also bestowed on Chris Walton (2020) and Mike Cook (2022). It was a bit of a long evening, but there was a lot of catching up to do! The interesting and sometimes humorous speeches made the time fly by.

On display were the numerous profiles and pictures that have been gathered over the past year by our 50th Anniversary Committee: Grant Mitchell, Krista Waring, John Murphy, Jeff Vince, John Wichers and Dennis Lang. These profiles represent the athletes, volunteers, Race Directors, Board Directors, Events and Sponsors that have been a part of Manito-

ba's road running scene since 1971. All of them are slowly going up on the MRA website so that none of the information is lost.

You can view them at: mraweb.ca/mra-50th-anniversary/.

Many thanks to this committee for putting in countless hours of work over the past year tracking down and interviewing people to create over 100 profiles.

We are hoping that this will be a living document, with profiles and information added as time goes by.

To another 50 years of road running in Manitoba.

For more information on Masters Athletics visit athleticsmanitoba.com