

Success lights flame

as Bob Fergie
tries out
different
events

Bob was born in England in 1935 and, as a boy, played soccer and cricket. His only athletics involvement was at a Boy Scout Carnival where he surprisingly won the high jump. His next jump was when he was forty. After school he started to play Rugby Union and became a regular full back. After National Service he spent five years making polio vaccine and in August 1962, “when there was nobody left to vaccinate”, he and his wife and daughter moved to Perth. He worked at the then Perth Chest Hospital and stayed there until he retired. He played rugby for the Royal Perth Hospital team and later for Cottesloe until 1971 when “his body called it a day”.

By this time he had four daughters and became associated with Hamersley Little Athletics Centre in its inaugural year. Until 1983 he was an active participant, as an official and as secretary and chairman. In 1996 he drafted their 25 year history. He was also an administrator and official for State and National Championships held in WA. And, over the years, was involved in organising Australian Masters Games and Firefighters Games and officiated at National

Championships for AAA, the Police and Australian Universities.

Perth used to send teams to the annual SW Championships in Capel and in 1977 Bob decided to have a go at competing. He entered a number of throwing and

jumping events, winning some and setting an over-35 high jump record. “The flame having been lit” he enquired about senior athletic clubs and was referred to the ‘new’ Western Australian Veteran Amateur Athletic Club, WAVAAC, who were then organising the 1977 Nationals. His first appearance for our club was at these championships where he gained a bronze in three throws and silver in the triple jump – and also the first of seven torn hamstrings over the next three years.

Competing at Perry Lakes, he developed a curiosity to try other events such as the pole vault but illusions about being a decathlete were shattered when he tried the 110m high hurdles. He found the hammer and heavyweight best suited his disintegrating knees and they remain his favourite events. But he is still faithful to the high jump, his first ever event, and takes a jump once a year at the State Championships – “it gives the young hopefuls something to chase and to keep them honest”. Bob has hardly missed any State Championships since the first in 1982 and has had more than 100 wins.

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Skills recognised



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He has only competed in Nationals that were held in Perth but “won the odd title” - 1982 high jump and hammer; 1989 shot. 1993 shot, high jump and hammer; 1996 hammer and shot. He has done three Capel to Collié relays, one Bunbury half marathon walk and many half marathon championship walks. He also does a bit of sprinting and is a regular Sunday race walker. He still holds the M60 state records for the hammer (35.92m) and heavyweight, (13.20m) set in 1997, and last year set an M75 record for the high jump (1.10m).

Rob Shand quickly recognised an organiser when he saw one and, in 1978, he persuaded Bob to be his assistant secretary.

This was the start of many years of service to the club – as a committee member, event manager for the 1982 Nationals, organiser of many state championships and on the LOC for others, up to 2007. Much of the donkey work associated with the production of the Newsletters was also done by Bob. In the early 80s he was involved in setting up the mid-

week T&F meetings and drew up the original points score system which he ran for a number of years. He also introduced the weight pentathlon and organised a number of the Pentathlon Championships as well as officiating at Club events. It’s no wonder he was voted life membership in 1982.

In this year’s State Championships, despite recent injury, Bob has entered a dozen events and has already picked up a silver medal in both the weight pentathlon and the 5000m walk. Looking further to the future he wants to continue as long as possible, to reach the 50 year membership mark (which will happen when he is 92) and to set a once a year high jump mark.